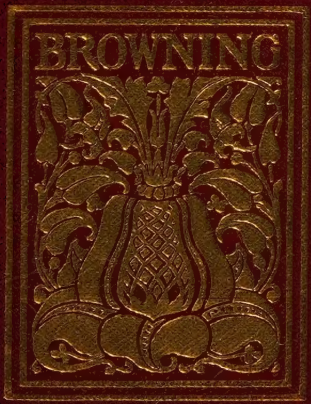
BROWNING

THE RING AND THE BOOK

VOL. II

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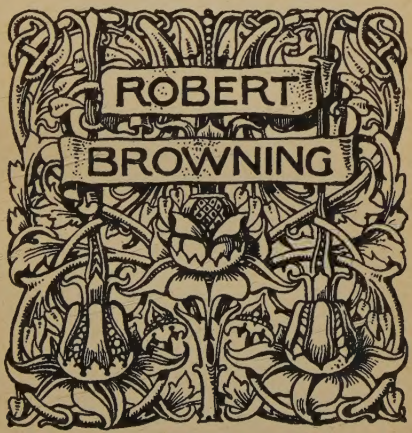

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THE RING AND THE BOOK

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

From the Author's Revised Text

Edited with Introductions and Notes by

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THE

RING AND THE BOOK.

1868–9.

VII.

POMPILIA.

[Pompilia, as she lies dying in the hospital, tells the story of her life with a simplicity, directness, and compassionateness that reveal a nature absolutely self-poised, — a nature that perceives the intrinsically right with unerring certainty in spite of Church, law, and public opinion, yet is forgiving toward those who had brought upon her such agonies of spirit, and can even accept the darkest crime of all as the means by which she will immediately attain the realization of perfect love.]

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks ;
'T is writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names
At length, so many names for one poor child,
— Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
Pompilia Comparini, — laughable !
Also 't is writ that I was married there
Four years ago : and they will add, I hope,
When they insert my death, a word or two, —
Omitting all about the mode of death, —
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,

That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have;
Because the boy was born at, so baptized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church:
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like, — while this Lorenzo seems
My own particular place, I always say.
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,
With half his body rushing from the wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man —
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life complete,
He is a boy and Gaetan by name —
Gaetano, for a reason, — if the friar
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me
Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was
Baptized me: he remembers my whole life
As I do his gray hair.

All these few things
I know are true, — will you remember them?
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,
To count my wounds, — twenty-two dagger-wounds,
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much —
Or too much pain, — and am to die to-night.

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
— Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt!
That had been sin God could not well forgive:

He was too young to smile and save himself.
When they took, two days after he was born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find, —
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
Said "Why take on so? where is the great loss?
These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,
Only begin to smile at the month's end;
He would not know you, if you kept him here,
Sooner than that; so, spend three merry weeks
Snug in the Villa, getting strong and stout,
And then I bring him back to be your own,
And both of you may steal to — we know where!"
The month — there wants of it two weeks this day!
Still, I half fancied when I heard the knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove she —
Come to say "Since he smiles before the time,
Why should I cheat you out of one good hour?
Back I have brought him; speak to him and judge!"
Now I shall never see him; what is worse,
When he grows up and gets to be my age,
He will seem hardly more than a great boy;
And if he asks "What was my mother like?"
People may answer "Like girls of seventeen" —
And how can he but think of this and that,
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or blush
When he regards them as such boys may do?
Therefore I wish some one will please to say
I looked already old though I was young;
Do I not . . . say, if you are by to speak . . .
Look nearer twenty? No more like, at least,
Girls who look arch or redden when boys laugh,
Than the poor Virgin that I used to know
At our street-corner in a lonely niche, —

The babe, that sat upon her knees, broke off, —
Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her the more:
She, not the gay ones, always got my rose.

How happy those are who know how to write!
Such could write what their son should read in time,
Had they a whole day to live out like me.
Also my name is not a common name,
"Pompilia," and may help to keep apart
A little the thing I am from what girls are.
But then how far away, how hard to find
Will anything about me have become,
Even if the boy bethink himself and ask!
No father that he ever knew at all,
Nor ever had — no, never had, I say!
That is the truth, — nor any mother left,
Out of the little two weeks that she lived,
Fit for such memory as might assist:
As good too as no family, no name,
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor hers,
Poor kind unwise Violante, since it seems
They must not be my parents any more.
That is why something put it in my head
To call the boy "Gaetano" — no old name
For sorrow's sake; I looked up to the sky
And took a new saint to begin anew.
One who has only been made saint — how long?
Twenty-five years: so, carefuller, perhaps,
To guard a namesake than those old saints grow,
Tired out by this time, — see my own five saints!

On second thoughts, I hope he will regard
The history of me as what someone dreamed,
And get to disbelieve it at the last:

Since to myself it dwindles fast to that,
Sheer dreaming and impossibility, —
Just in four days too! All the seventeen years,
Not once did a suspicion visit me
How very different a lot is mine
From any other woman's in the world.
The reason must be, 't was by step and step
It got to grow so terrible and strange.
These strange woes stole on tiptoe, as it were,
Into my neighborhood and privacy,
Sat down where I sat, laid them where I lay;
And I was found familiarized with fear,
When friends broke in, held up a torch and cried
"Why, you Pompilia in the cavern thus,
How comes that arm of yours about a wolf?
And the soft length, — lies in and out your feet
And laps you round the knee, — a snake it is!"
And so on.

Well, and they are right enough,
By the torch they hold up now: for first, observe,
I never had a father, — no, nor yet
A mother: my own boy can say at least
"I had a mother whom I kept two weeks!"
Not I, who little used to doubt . . . *I* doubt
Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave me birth?
They loved me always as I love my babe
(— Nearly so, that is — quite so could not be —)
Did for me all I meant to do for him,
Till one surprising day, three years ago,
They both declared, at Rome, before some judge
In some Court where the people flocked to hear,
That really I had never been their child,
Was a mere castaway, the careless crime

Of an unknown man, the crime and care too much
Of a woman known too well, — little to these,
Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood:
What then to Pietro and Violante, both
No more my relatives than you or you?
Nothing to them! You know what they declared.

So with my husband, — just such a surprise,
Such a mistake, in that relationship!
Everyone says that husbands love their wives,
Guard them and guide them, give them happiness;
'Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion: well,
You see how much of this comes true in mine!
People indeed would fain have somehow proved
He was no husband: but he did not hear,
Or would not wait, and so has killed us all.
Then there is . . . only let me name one more!
There is the friend, — men will not ask about,
But tell untruths of, and give nicknames to,
And think my lover, most surprise of all!
Do only hear, it is the priest they mean,
Giuseppe Caponsacchi: a priest — love,
And love me! Well, yet people think he did.
I am married, he has taken priestly vows,
They know that, and yet go on, say, the same,
"Yes, how he loves you!" "That was love" — they say,
When anything is answered that they ask:
Or else "No wonder you love him" — they say.
Then they shake heads, pity much, scarcely blame —
As if we neither of us lacked excuse,
And anyhow are punished to the full,
And downright love atones for everything!
Nay, I heard read out in the public Court

Before the judge, in presence of my friends,
Letters 't was said the priest had sent to me,
And other letters sent him by myself,
We being lovers !
Listen what this is like !
When I was a mere child, my mother . . . that 's
Violante, you must let me call her so
Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the word . . .
She brought a neighbor's child of my own age
To play with me of rainy afternoons ;
And, since there hung a tapestry on the wall,
We two agreed to find each other out
Among the figures. " Tisbe, that is you,
With half-moon on your hair-knot, spear in hand,
Flying, but no wings, only the great scarf
Blown to a bluish rainbow at your back :
Call off your hound and leave the stag alone ! "
" — And there are you, Pompilia, such green leaves
Flourishing out of your five finger ends,
And all the rest of you so brown and rough :
Why is it you are turned a sort of tree ? "
You know the figures never were ourselves
Though we nicknamed them so. Thus, all my life, —
As well what was, as what, like this, was not, —
Looks old, fantastic and impossible :
I touch a fairy thing that fades and fades.
— Even to my babe ! I thought, when he was born,
Something began for once that would not end,
Nor change into a laugh at me, but stay
For evermore, eternally quite mine.
Well, so he is, — but yet they bore him off,
The third day, lest my husband should lay traps
And catch him, and by means of him catch me.
Since they have saved him so, it was well done :

Yet thence comes such confusion of what was
With what will be, — that late seems long ago,
And, what years should bring round, already come,
Till even he withdraws into a dream
As the rest do : I fancy him grown great,
Strong, stern, a tall young man who tutors me,
Frowns with the others " Poor imprudent child !
Why did you venture out of the safe street ?
Why go so far from help to that lone house ?
Why open at the whisper and the knock ? "

Six days ago when it was New Year's-day,
We bent above the fire and talked of him,
What he should do when he was grown and great.
Violante, Pietro, each had given the arm
I leant on, to walk by, from couch to chair
And fireside, — laughed, as I lay safe at last,
" Pompilia's march from bed to board is made,
Pompilia back again and with a babe,
Shall one day lend his arm and help her walk ! "
Then we all wished each other more New Years.
Pietro began to scheme — " Our cause is gained ;
The law is stronger than a wicked man :
Let him henceforth go his way, leave us ours !
We will avoid the city, tempt no more
The greedy ones by feasting and parade, —
Live at the other villa, we know where,
Still farther off, and we can watch the babe
Grow fast in the good air ; and wood is cheap
And wine sincere outside the city gate.
I still have two or three old friends will grope
Their way along the mere half-mile of road,
With staff and lantern on a moonless night
When one needs talk : they 'll find me, never fear,

And I 'll find them a flask of the old sort yet !" 240
Violante said " You chatter like a crow :
Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and shall to bed :
Do not too much the first day, — somewhat more
To-morrow, and, the next, begin the cape
And hood and coat ! I have spun wool enough."
Oh what a happy friendly eve was that !

And, next day, about noon, out Pietro went —
He was so happy and would talk so much,
Until Violante pushed and laughed him forth
Sight-seeing in the cold, — " So much to see 250
I' the churches ! Swathe your throat three times !"
she cried,
" And, above all, beware the slippery ways,
And bring us all the news by supper-time !"
He came back late, laid by cloak, staff and hat,
Powdered so thick with snow it made us laugh,
Rolled a great log upon the ash o' the hearth,
And bade Violante treat us to a flask,
Because he had obeyed her faithfully,
Gone sight-see through the seven, and found no church
To his mind like San Giovanni — " There 's the fold,
And all the sheep together, big as cats ! 261
And such a shepherd, half the size of life,
Starts up and hears the angel " — when, at the door,
A tap : we started up : you know the rest.

Pietro at least had done no harm, I know ;
Nor even Violante, so much harm as makes
Such revenge lawful. Certainly she erred —
Did wrong, how shall I dare say otherwise ? —
In telling that first falsehood, buying me

From my poor faulty mother at a price,
To pass off upon Pietro as his child.
If one should take my babe, give him a name,
Say he was not Gaetano and my own,
But that some other woman made his mouth
And hands and feet, — how very false were that!
No good could come of that; and all harm did.
Yet if a stranger were to represent
"Needs must you either give your babe to me
And let me call him mine for evermore,
Or let your husband get him" — ah, my God,
That were a trial I refuse to face!
Well, just so here: it proved wrong but seemed right
To poor Violante — for there lay, she said,
My poor real dying mother in her rags,
Who put me from her with the life and all,
Poverty, pain, shame and disease at once,
To die the easier by what price I fetched —
Also (I hope) because I should be spared
Sorrow and sin, — why may not that have helped?
My father, — he was no one, any one, —
The worse, the likelier, — call him — he who came,
Was wicked for his pleasure, went his way,
And left no trace to track by; there remained
Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,
To catch up or let fall, — and yet a thing
She could make happy, be made happy with,
This poor Violante, — who would frown thereat?

Well, God, you see! God plants us where we grow.
It is not that because a bud is born
At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild beast's way,
We ought to pluck and put it out of reach
On the oak-tree top, — say "There the bud belongs!"

She thought, moreover, real lies were lies told
For harm's sake; whereas this had good at heart,
Good for my mother, good for me, and good
For Pietro who was meant to love a babe,
And needed one to make his life of use,
Receive his house and land when he should die.
Wrong, wrong and always wrong! how plainly wrong!
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,
All the same at her heart: this falsehood hatched,
She could not let it go nor keep it fast.
She told me so, — the first time I was found
Locked in her arms once more after the pain,
When the nuns let me leave them and go home,
And both of us cried all the cares away, —
This it was set her on to make amends,
This brought about the marriage — simply this!
Do let me speak for her you blame so much!
When Paul, my husband's brother, found me out,
Heard there was wealth for who should marry me,
So, came and made a speech to ask my hand
For Guido, — she, instead of piercing straight
Through the pretence to the ignoble truth,
Fancied she saw God's very finger point,
Designate just the time for planting me
(The wild-briar slip she plucked to love and wear)
In soil where I could strike real root, and grow,
And get to be the thing I called myself:
For, wife and husband are one flesh, God says,
And I, whose parents seemed such and were none,
Should in a husband have a husband now,
Find nothing, this time, but was what it seemed,
— All truth and no confusion any more.
I know she meant all good to me, all pain
To herself, — since how could it be aught but pain,

To give me up, so, from her very breast,
The wilding flower-tree-branch that, all those years,
She had got used to feel for and find fixed?
She meant well: has it been so ill i' the main?
That is but fair to ask: one cannot judge
Of what has been the ill or well of life,
The day that one is dying, — sorrows change
Into not altogether sorrow-like;
I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
Now it is over, and no danger more.
My child is safe; there seems not so much pain.
It comes, most like, that I am just absolved,
Purged of the past, the foul in me, washed fair, —
One cannot both have and not have, you know, —
Being right now, I am happy and color things.
Yes, everybody that leaves life sees all
Softened and bettered: so with other sights:
To me at least was never evening yet
But seemed far beautifuller than its day,
For past is past.

There was a fancy came,
When somewhere, in the journey with my friend,
We stepped into a hovel to get food;
And there began a yelp here, a bark there, —
Misunderstanding creatures that were wroth
And vexed themselves and us till we retired.
The hovel is life: no matter what dogs bit
Or cats scratched in the hovel I break from,
All outside is lone field, moon and such peace —
Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
Whereon comes Someone, walks fast on the white,
Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine declares,
To meet me and calm all things back again.

Beside, up to my marriage, thirteen years
Were, each day, happy as the day was long:
This may have made the change too terrible.
I know that when Violante told me first
The cavalier — she meant to bring next morn,
Whom I must also let take, kiss my hand —
Would be at San Lorenzo the same eve
And marry me, — which over, we should go
Home both of us without him as before,
And, till she bade speak, I must hold my tongue,
Such being the correct way with girl-brides,
From whom one word would make a father blush, —
I know, I say, that when she told me this,
— Well, I no more saw sense in what she said
Than a lamb does in people clipping wool;
Only lay down and let myself be clipped.
And when next day the cavalier who came —
(Tisbe had told me that the slim young man
With wings at head, and wings at feet, and sword
Threatening a monster, in our tapestry,
Would eat a girl else, — was a cavalier)
When he proved Guido Franceschini, — old
And nothing like so tall as I myself,
Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush of beard,
Much like a thing I saw on a boy's wrist,
He called an owl and used for catching birds, —
And when he took my hand and made a smile —
Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
Seemed hardly more important in the case
Than, — when one gives you, say, a coin to spend, —
Its newness or its oldness; if the piece
Weigh properly and buy you what you wish,
No matter whether you get grime or glare!
Men take the coin, return you grapes and figs.

Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty piece
Would purchase me the praise of those I loved:
About what else should I concern myself?

So, hardly knowing what a husband meant,
I supposed this or any man would serve,
No whit the worse for being so uncouth:
For I was ill once and a doctor came
With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
Black jerkin and black buckles and black sword,
And white sharp beard over the ruff in front,
And oh so lean, so sour-faced and austere! —
Who felt my pulse, made me put out my tongue,
Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or two
Of a black bitter something, — I was cured!
What mattered the fierce beard or the grim face?
It was the physic beautified the man,
Master Malpichi, — never met his match
In Rome, they said, — so ugly all the same!

However, I was hurried through a storm,
Next dark eve of December's deadest day —
How it rained! — through our street and the Lion's-mouth
And the bit of Corso, — cloaked round, covered close,
I was like something strange or contraband, —
Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
I fancied we were come to see a corpse
Before the altar which she pulled me toward.
There we found waiting an unpleasant priest
Who proved the brother, not our parish friend,
But one with mischief-making mouth and eye,
Paul, whom I know since to my cost. And then

I heard the heavy church-door lock out help
Behind us: for the customary warmth,
Two tapers shivered on the altar. "Quick —
Lose no time!" cried the priest. And straightway down
From . . . what 's behind the altar where he hid —
Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush and all,
Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and there was I
O' the chancel, and the priest had opened book,
Read here and there, made me say that and this,
And after, told me I was now a wife,
Honored indeed, since Christ thus weds the Church,
And therefore turned he water into wine,
To show I should obey my spouse like Christ.
Then the two slipped aside and talked apart,
And I, silent and scared, got down again
And joined my mother who was weeping now.
Nobody seemed to mind us any more,
And both of us on tiptoe found our way
To the door which was unlocked by this, and wide.
When we were in the street, the rain had stopped,
All things looked better. At our own house-door,
Violante whispered "No one syllable
To Pietro! Girl-brides never breathe a word!"
"— Well treated to a wetting, draggle-tails!"
Laughed Pietro as he opened — "Very near
You made me brave the gutter's roaring sea
To carry off from roost old dove and young,
Trussed up in church, the cote, by me, the kite!
What do these priests mean, praying folk to death
On stormy afternoons, with Christmas close
To wash our sins off nor require the rain?"
Violante gave my hand a timely squeeze,
Madonna saved me from immodest speech,
I kissed him and was quiet, being a bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next three weeks,
Of Guido — "Nor the Church sees Christ" thought I:
"Nothing is changed however, wine is wine
And water only water in our house.
Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
That cure of the illness: just as I was cured,
I am married, — neither scarecrow will return."

Three weeks, I chuckled — "How would Giulia stare,
And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh outright,
Were it not impudent for brides to talk!" —
Until one morning, as I sat and sang
At the broidery-frame alone i' the chamber, — loud
Voices, two, three together, sobbings too,
And my name, "Guido," "Paolo," flung like stones
From each to the other! In I ran to see.
There stood the very Guido and the priest
With sly face, — formal but nowise afraid, —
While Pietro seemed all red and angry, scarce
Able to stutter out his wrath in words;
And this it was that made my mother sob,
As he reproached her — "You have murdered us,
Me and yourself and this our child beside!"
Then Guido interposed "Murdered or not,
Be it enough your child is now my wife!
I claim and come to take her." Paul put in,
"Consider — kinsman, dare I term you so? —
What is the good of your sagacity
Except to counsel in a strait like this?
I guarantee the parties man and wife
Whether you like or loathe it, bless or ban.
May spilt milk be put back within the bowl —
The done thing, undone? You, it is, we look
For counsel to, you fitliest will advise!

Since milk, though spilt and spoilt, does marble good,
Better we down on knees and scrub the floor,
Than sigh, 'the waste would make a syllabub!'
Help us so turn disaster to account,
So predispose the groom, he needs shall grace
The bride with favor from the very first,
Not begin marriage an embittered man!"
He smiled, — the game so wholly in his hands!
While fast and faster sobbed Violante — "Ay,
All of us murdered, past averting now!
O my sin, O my secret!" and such like.

Then I began to half surmise the truth;
Something had happened, low, mean, underhand,
False, and my mother was to blame, and I
To pity, whom all spoke of, none addressed:
I was the chattel that had caused a crime.
I stood mute, — those who tangled must untie
The embroilment. Pietro cried "Withdraw, my child!
She is not helpful to the sacrifice
At this stage, — do you want the victim by
While you discuss the value of her blood?
For her sake, I consent to hear you talk:
Go, child, and pray God help the innocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when came
Violante, with eyes swollen and red enough,
But movement on her mouth for make-believe
Matters were somehow getting right again.
She bade me sit down by her side and hear.
"You are too young and cannot understand,
Nor did your father understand at first.
I wished to benefit all three of us,
And when he failed to take my meaning, — why,
I tried to have my way at unaware —

Obtained him the advantage he refused.
As if I put before him wholesome food
Instead of broken victual, — he finds change
I' the viands, never cares to reason why,
But falls to blaming me, would fling the plate
From window, scandalize the neighborhood,
Even while he smacks his lips, — men's way, my child!
But either you have prayed him unperverse
Or I have talked him back into his wits:
And Paolo was a help in time of need, —
Guido, not much — my child, the way of men!
A priest is more a woman than a man,
And Paul did wonders to persuade. In short,
Yes, he was wrong, your father sees and says;
My scheme was worth attempting: and bears fruit,
Gives you a husband and a noble name,
A palace and no end of pleasant things.
What do you care about a handsome youth?
They are so volatile, and tease their wives!
This is the kind of man to keep the house.
We lose no daughter, — gain a son, that 's all:
For 't is arranged we never separate,
Nor miss, in our gray time of life, the tints
Of you that color eve to match with morn.
In good or ill, we share and share alike,
And cast our lots into a common lap,
And all three die together as we lived!
Only, at Arezzo, — that 's a Tuscan town,
Not so large as this noisy Rome, no doubt,
But older far and finer much, say folk, —
In a great palace where you will be queen,
Know the Archbishop and the Governor,
And we see homage done you ere we die.
Therefore, be good and pardon!" — "Pardon what?

You know things, I am very ignorant:
All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank begins
From when, at the word, she kissed me hard and hot,
And took me back to where my father leaned
Opposite Guido — who stood eyeing him,
As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox
That feels his fate is come, nor struggles more, —
While Paul looked archly on, pricked brow at whiles
With the pen-point as to punish triumph there, —
And said "Count Guido, take your lawful wife
Until death part you!"

All since is one blank,
Over and ended; a terrific dream.
It is the good of dreams — so soon they go!
Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you may —
Cry "The dread thing will never from my thoughts!"
Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,
Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat and bell
Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be milked;
And when you rub your eyes awake and wide,
Where is the harm o' the horror? Gone! So here.
I know I wake, — but from what? Blank, I say!
This is the note of evil: for good lasts.
Even when Don Celestine bade "Search and find!
For your soul's sake, remember what is past,
The better to forgive it," — all in vain!
What was fast getting indistinct before,
Vanished outright. By special grace perhaps,
Between that first calm and this last, four years
Vanish, — one quarter of my life, you know.
I am held up, amid the nothingness,
By one or two truths only — thence I hang,

And there I live, — the rest is death or dream,
All but those points of my support. I think
Of what I saw at Rome once in the Square
O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish House:
There was a foreigner had trained a goat,
A shuddering white woman of a beast,
To climb up, stand straight on a pile of sticks
Put close, which gave the creature room enough:
When she was settled there he, one by one,
Took away all the sticks, left just the four
Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,
There she kept firm, all underneath was air.
So, what I hold by, are my prayer to God,
My hope, that came in answer to the prayer,
Some hand would interpose and save me — hand
Which proved to be my friend's hand: and, — blest bliss, —
That fancy which began so faint at first,
That thrill of dawn's suffusion through my dark,
Which I perceive was promise of my child,
The light his unborn face sent long before, —
God's way of breaking the good news to flesh.
That is all left now of those four bad years.
Don Celestine urged "But remember more!
Other men's faults may help me find your own.
I need the cruelty exposed, explained,
Or how can I advise you to forgive?"
He thought I could not properly forgive
Unless I ceased forgetting, — which is true:
For, bringing back reluctantly to mind
My husband's treatment of me, — by a light
That 's later than my life-time, I review
And comprehend much and imagine more,
And have but little to forgive at last.

For now, — be fair and say, — is it not true
He was ill-used and cheated of his hope
To get enriched by marriage? Marriage gave
Me and no money, broke the compact so:
He had a right to ask me on those terms,
As Pietro and Violante to declare
They would not give me: so the bargain stood:
They broke it, and he felt himself aggrieved,
Became unkind with me to punish them.
They said 't was he began deception first,
Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,
Kept promise: what of that, suppose it were?
Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate
For ever, — why should ill keep echoing ill,
And never let our ears have done with noise?
Then my poor parents took the violent way
To thwart him, — he must needs retaliate, — wrong,
Wrong, and all wrong, — better say, all blind!
As I myself was, that is sure, who else
Had understood the mystery: for his wife
Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.
It seems as if I might have interposed,
Blunted the edge of their resentment so,
Since he vexed me because they first vexed him;
"I will entreat them to desist, submit,
Give him the money and be poor in peace, —
Certainly not go tell the world: perhaps
He will grow quiet with his gains."

Yes, say
Something to this effect and you do well!
But then you have to see first: I was blind.
That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,
The indirect, the unapproved of God:

You cannot find their author's end and aim,
Not even to substitute your good for bad,
Your straight for the irregular; you stand
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep
That miss a man's mind, anger him just twice
By trial at repairing the first fault.
Thus, when he blamed me, "You are a coquette,
A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,
You look love-lures at theatre and church,
In walk, at window!" — that, I knew, was false:
But why he charged me falsely, whither sought
To drive me by such charge, — how could I know?
So, unaware, I only made things worse.
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
Window, church, theatre, for good and all,
As if he had been in earnest: that, you know,
Was nothing like the object of his charge.
Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate
The priest, whose name she read when she would read
Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear
Though I could read no word of, — he should cease
Writing, — nay, if he minded prayer of mine,
Cease from so much as even pass the street
Whereon our house looked, — in my ignorance
I was just thwarting Guido's true intent;
Which was, to bring about a wicked change
Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man
To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,
Till both of us were taken in a crime.
He ought not to have wished me thus act lies,
Simulate folly: but, — wrong or right, the wish, —
I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain
It follows, — if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,

Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
I' the whole sad strange plot, the grotesque intrigue
To make me and my friend unself ourselves,
Be other man and woman than we were!
Think it out, you who have the time! for me, —
I cannot say less; more I will not say.
Leave it to God to cover and undo!
Only, my dulness should not prove too much!
— Not prove that in a certain other point
Wherein my husband blamed me, — and you blame,
If I interpret smiles and shakes of head, —
I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!
Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent
A way to make my husband's favor come.
That is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . . .
— Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed
I had no right to give nor he to take;
We being in estrangement, soul from soul:
Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
Inquiring into privacies of life,
— Said I was blamable — (he stands for God)
Nowise entitled to exemption there.
Then I obeyed, — as surely had obeyed
Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,
Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"
But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice
Though he were thrice Archbishop, — that, I know! —
Now I have got to die and see things clear.
Remember I was barely twelve years old —
A child at marriage: I was let alone
For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found

First . . . but I need not think of that again —
Over and ended! Try and take the sense
Of what I signify, if it must be so.
After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,
Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,
"We have been man and wife six months almost:
How long is this your comedy to last?
Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"
At which word, I did rush — most true the charge —
And gain the Archbishop's house — he stands for God —
And fall upon my knees and clasp his feet,
Praying him hinder what my estranged soul
Refused to bear, though patient of the rest:
"Place me within a convent," I implored —
"Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
You praise in Her you bid me imitate!"
What did he answer? "Folly of ignorance!
Know, daughter, circumstances make or mar
Virginity, — 't is virtue or 't is vice.
That which was glory in the Mother of God
Had been, for instance, damnable in Eve
Created to be mother of mankind.
Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech
'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish earth' —
Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain
Single,' — why, she had spared herself forthwith
Further probation by the apple and snake,
Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see —
If motherhood be qualified impure,
I catch you making God command Eve sin!
— A blasphemy so like these Molinists',
I must suspect you dip into their books."
Then he pursued "'T was in your covenant!"

No! There my husband never used deceit.
He never did by speech nor act imply
"Because of our souls' yearning that we meet
And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine
Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,
— All which means, for the love of you and me,
Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"
He only stipulated for the wealth;
Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain —
Dreadfully honest also — "Since our souls
Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,
Give me the fleshly vesture I can reach
And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!" —
Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake
Imperilled by polluting mine, — I say,
I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's smile;
— It seemed so stale and worn a way o' the world,
As though 't were nature frowning — "Here is Spring,
The sun shines as he shone at Adam's fall,
The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:
What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth
Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?"
Something in this style he began with me.
Last he said, savagely for a good man,
"This explains why you call your husband harsh,
Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God's Bread!
The poor Count has to manage a mere child
Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things
Their duty was and privilege to teach, —
Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh
And leave the Count the task, — or leave it me!"
Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.

"I am not ignorant, — know what I say,
Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.
Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.
I tell you that my housemate, yes — the priest
My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo —
Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love
Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,
For he solicits me and says he loves,
The idle young priest with naught else to do.
My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.
Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"
"— More scandal, and against a priest this time!
What, 't is the Canon now?" — less snappishly —
"Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,
The rod were too advanced a punishment!
Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable!
'Without a parable spake He not to them.'
There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,
Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May:
And, to the tree, said . . . either the spirit o' the fig,
Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,
Archbishop of the orchard — had I time
To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed
It might be the Creator's self, but then
The tree should bear an apple, I suppose, —
Well, anyhow, one with authority said
'Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker —
The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!'
'Nay,' with a flounce, replied the restif fig,
'I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:
He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,
Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!'
So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.
He flew off, left her, — did the natural lord, —

And lo, three hundred thousand bees and wasps
Found her out, feasted on her to the shuck:
Such gain the fig's that gave its bird no bite!
The moral, — fools elude their proper lot,
Tempt other fools, get ruined all alike.
Therefore go home, embrace your husband quick!
Which if his Canon brother chance to see,
He will the sooner back to book again."

So, home I did go; so, the worst befell:
So, I had proof the Archbishop was just man,
And hardly that, and certainly no more.
For, miserable consequence to me,
My husband's hatred waxed nor waned at all,
His brother's boldness grew effrontery soon,
And my last stay and comfort in myself
Was forced from me: henceforth I looked to God
Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
Should have fair walls, gay windows for the world.
God's glimmer, that came through the ruin-top,
Was witness why all lights were quenched inside:
Henceforth I asked God counsel, not mankind.

So, when I made the effort, freed myself,
They said — "No care to save appearance here!
How cynic, — when, how wanton, were enough!"
— Adding, it all came of my mother's life —
My own real mother, whom I never knew,
Who did wrong (if she needs must have done wrong)
Through being all her life, not my four years,
At mercy of the hateful: every beast
O' the field was wont to break that fountain-fence,
Trample the silver into mud so murk
Heaven could not find itself reflected there.

Now they cry "Out on her, who, plashy pool,
Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
To the daughter-stream where Guido dipt and drank!"

Well, since she had to bear this brand — let me!
The rather do I understand her now,
From my experience of what hate calls love, —
Much love might be in what their love called hate.
If she sold . . . what they call, sold . . . me her child —
I shall believe she hoped in her poor heart
That I at least might try be good and pure,
Begin to live untempted, not go doomed
And done with ere once found in fault, as she.
Oh and, my mother, it all came to this?
Why should I trust those that speak ill of you,
When I mistrust who speaks even well of them?
Why, since all bound to do me good, did harm,
May not you, seeming as you harmed me most,
Have meant to do most good — and feed your child
From bramble-bush, whom not one orchard-tree
But drew bough back from, nor let one fruit fall?
This it was for you sacrificed your babe?
Gained just this, giving your heart's hope away
As I might give mine, loving it as you,
If . . . but that never could be asked of me!

There, enough! I have my support again,
Again the knowledge that my babe was, is,
Will be mine only. Him, by death, I give
Outright to God, without a further care, —
But not to any parent in the world, —
So to be safe: why is it we repine?
What guardianship were safer could we choose?

All human plans and projects come to naught:
My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that: no plan nor project! God shall care!

And now you are not tired? How patient then
All of you, — Oh yes, patient this long while
Listening, and understanding, I am sure!
Four days ago, when I was sound and well
And like to live, no one would understand.
People were kind, but smiled "And what of him,
Your friend, whose tonsure the rich dark-brown hides?
There, there! — your lover, do we dream he was?
A priest too — never were such naughtiness!
Still, he thinks many a long think, never fear,
After the shy pale lady, — lay so light
For a moment in his arms, the lucky one!"
And so on: wherefore should I blame you much?
So we are made, such difference in minds,
Such difference too in eyes that see the minds!
That man, you misinterpret and misprise —
The glory of his nature, I had thought,
Shot itself out in white light, blazed the truth
Through every atom of his act with me:
Yet where I point you, through the crystal shrine,
Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,
You all descry a spider in the midst.
One says "The head of it is plain to see,"
And one, "They are the feet by which I judge,"
All say, "Those films were spun by nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with God,
Nor think of him again, for gratitude.
Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend itself
In one attempt more to disperse the stain,

The mist from other breath fond mouths have made,
About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
So that, when I am gone but sorrow stays,
And people need assurance in their doubt
If God yet have a servant, man a friend,
The weak a saviour and the vile a foe, —
Let him be present, by the name invoked,
Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!
There,
Strength comes already with the utterance!
I will remember once more for his sake
The sorrow: for he lives and is belied.
Could he be here, how he would speak for me!

I had been miserable three drear years
In that dread palace and lay passive now,
When I first learned there could be such a man.
Thus it fell: I was at a public play,
In the last days of Carnival last March,
Brought there I knew not why, but now know well.
My husband put me where I sat, in front;
Then crouched down, breathed cold through me from behind,
Stationed i' the shadow, — none in front could see, —
I, it was, faced the stranger-throng beneath,
The crowd with upturned faces, eyes one stare,
Voices one buzz. I looked but to the stage,
Whereon two lovers sang and interchanged
"True life is only love, love only bliss:
I love thee — thee I love!" then they embraced.
I looked thence to the ceiling and the walls, —
Over the crowd, those voices and those eyes, —
My thoughts went through the roof and out, to Rome
On wings of music, waft of measured words, —

Set me down there, a happy child again
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-day,
Hearing my parents praise past festas more,
And seeing they were old if I was young,
Yet wondering why they still would end discourse
With "We must soon go, you abide your time,
And, — might we haply see the proper friend
Throw his arm over you and make you safe!"

Sudden I saw him; into my lap there fell
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my dream
And brought me from the air and laid me low,
As ruined as the soaring bee that 's reached
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
By the dust-handful. There the comfits lay:
I looked to see who flung them, and I faced
This Caponsacchi, looking up in turn.
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
Whoever flung them, his was not the hand, —
Up rose the round face and good-natured grin
Of one who, in effect, had played the prank,
From covert close beside the earnest face, —
Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the world.
He was my husband's cousin, privileged
To throw the thing: the other, silent, grave,
Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.

There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
"Had I a dove's wings, how I fain would flee!"
The psalm runs not "I hope, I pray for wings," —
Not "If wings fall from heaven, I fix them fast," —
Simply "How good it were to fly and rest,
Have hope now, and one day expect content!
How well to do what I shall never do!"

So I said "Had there been a man like that,
To lift me with his strength out of all strife
Into the calm, how I could fly and rest!
I have a keeper in the garden here
Whose sole employment is to strike me low
If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
Life means with me successful feigning death,
Lying stone-like, eluding notice so,
Foregoing here the turf and there the sky.
Suppose that man had been instead of this!"

Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
— Had tripped up to the raised place where I sat —
"Cousin, I flung them brutishly and hard!
Because you must be hurt, to look austere
As Caponsacchi yonder, my tall friend
A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you so close?
Keep on your knees, do! Beg her to forgive!
My cornet battered like a cannon-ball.
Good-bye, I 'm gone!" — nor waited the reply.

That night at supper, out my husband broke,
"Why was that throwing, that buffoonery?
Do you think I am your dupe? What man would dare
Throw comfits in a stranger lady's lap?
'T was knowledge of you bred such insolence
In Caponsacchi; he dared shoot the bolt,
Using that Conti for his stalking-horse.
How could you see him this once and no more,
When he is always haunting hereabout
At the street-corner or the palace-side,
Publishing my shame and your impudence?
You are a wanton, — I a dupe, you think?
O Christ, what hinders that I kill her quick?"
Whereat he drew his sword and feigned a thrust.

All this, now, — being not so strange to me,
Used to such misconception day by day
And broken-in to bear, — I bore, this time,
More quietly than woman should perhaps;
Repeated the mere truth and held my tongue.

Then he said, "Since you play the ignorant,
I shall instruct you. This amour, — commenced
Or finished or midway in act, all 's one, —
'T is the town-talk; so my revenge shall be.
Does he presume because he is a priest?
I warn him that the sword I wear shall pink
His lily-scented cassock through and through,
Next time I catch him underneath your eaves!"
But he had threatened with the sword so oft
And, after all, not kept his promise. All
I said was "Let God save the innocent!
Moreover death is far from a bad fate.
I shall go pray for you and me, not him;
And then I look to sleep, come death or, worse,
Life." So, I slept.

There may have elapsed a week,
When Margherita, — called my waiting-maid,
Whom it is said my husband found too fair —
Who stood and heard the charge and the reply,
Who never once would let the matter rest
From that night forward, but rang changes still
On this the thrust and that the shame, and how
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous fools,
And what a paragon was this same priest
She talked about until I stopped my ears, —
She said, "A week is gone; you comb your hair,
Then go mope in a corner, cheek on palm,

Till night comes round again, — so, waste a week
As if your husband menaced you in sport.
Have not I some acquaintance with his tricks?
Oh no, he did not stab the serving-man
Who made and sang the rhymes about me once!
For why? They sent him to the wars next day.
Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my friend
Who wagered on the whiteness of my breast, —
The swarth skins of our city in dispute:
For, though he paid me proper compliment,
The Count well knew he was besotted with
Somebody else, a skin as black as ink
(As all the town knew save my foreigner)
He found and wedded presently, — 'Why need
Better revenge?' — the Count asked. But what 's here?
A priest that does not fight, and cannot wed,
Yet must be dealt with! If the Count took fire
For the poor pastime of a minute, — me —
What were the conflagration for yourself,
Countess and lady-wife and all the rest?
The priest will perish; you will grieve too late:
So shall the city-ladies' handsomest
Frankest and liberalest gentleman
Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog
Hanging 's too good for. Is there no escape?
Were it not simple Christian charity
To warn the priest be on his guard, — save him
Assured death, save yourself from causing it?
I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,
A ring to show for token! Mum 's the word!"

I answered "If you were, as styled, my maid,
I would command you: as you are, you say,
My husband's intimate, — assist his wife

Who can do nothing but entreat 'Be still!'
Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,
Leave help to God as I am forced to do!
There is no other help, or we should craze,
Seeing such evil with no human cure.
Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,
Can make an angry violent heart subside.
Why should we venture teach Him governance?
Never address me on this subject more!"

Next night she said "But I went, all the same,
— Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,
And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.
I told him 'Sir, my mistress is a stone:
Why should you harm her for no good you get?
For you do harm her — prowl about our place
With the Count never distant half the street,
Lurking at every corner, would you look!
'T is certain she has witched you with a spell.
Are there not other beauties at your beck?
We all know, Donna This and Monna That
Die for a glance of yours, yet here you gaze!
Go make them grateful, leave the stone its cold!'
And he — oh, he turned first white and then red,
And then — 'To her behest I bow myself,
Whom I love with my body and my soul:
Only a word i' the bowing! See, I write
One little word, no harm to see or hear!
Then, fear no further!' This is what he wrote.
I know you cannot read, — therefore, let me!
'*My idol!*'" . . .

But I took it from her hand
And tore it into shreds. "Why join the rest
Who harm me? Have I ever done you wrong?

People have told me 't is you wrong myself:
Let it suffice I either feel no wrong
Or else forgive it, — yet you turn my foe!
The others hunt me and you throw a noose!"

She muttered "Have your wilful way!" I slept.

Whereupon . . . no, I leave my husband out!
It is not to do him more hurt, I speak.
Let it suffice, when misery was most,
One day, I swooned and got a respite so.
She stooped as I was slowly coming to,
This Margherita, ever on my trace,
And whispered — "Caponsacchi!"

If I drowned,
But woke afloat i' the wave with upturned eyes,
And found their first sight was a star! I turned —
For the first time, I let her have her will,
Heard passively, — "The imposthume at such head,
One touch, one lancet-puncture would relieve, —
And still no glance the good physician's way
Who rids you of the torment in a trice!
Still he writes letters you refuse to hear.
He may prevent your husband, kill himself,
So desperate and all fordone is he!
Just hear the pretty verse he made to-day!
A sonnet from Mirtillo. '*Peerless fair . . .*'
All poetry is difficult to read,
— The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks
Leave to contrive you an escape from hell,
And for that purpose asks an interview.
I can write, I can grant it in your name,
Or, what is better, lead you to his house.
Your husband dashes you against the stones;

This man would place each fragment in a shrine:
You hate him, love your husband!"

I returned
"It is not true I love my husband, — no,
Nor hate this man. I listen while you speak,
— Assured that what you say is false, the same:
Much as when once, to me a little child,
A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes on fire,
A crowd of boys and idlers at his heels,
Rushed as I crossed the Square, and held my head
In his two hands, 'Here 's she will let me speak!
You little girl, whose eyes do good to mine,
I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the Sixth;
And that Twelfth Innocent, proclaimed to-day,
Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh!
The angels met in conclave, crowned me!' — thus
He gibbered and I listened; but I knew
All was delusion, ere folk interposed
'Unfasten him, the maniac!' Thus I know
All your report of Caponsacchi false,
Folly or dreaming; I have seen so much
By that adventure at the spectacle,
The face I fronted that one first, last time:
He would belie it by such words and thoughts.
Therefore while you profess to show him me,
I ever see his own face. Get you gone!"

"That will I, nor once open mouth again, —
No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy Ghost!
On your head be the damage, so adieu!"

And so more days, more deeds I must forget,
Till . . . what a strange thing now is to declare!
Since I say anything, say all if true!

And how my life seems lengthened as to serve!
It may be idle or inopportune,
But, true? — why, what was all I said but truth,
Even when I found that such as are untrue
Could only take the truth in through a lie?
Now — I am speaking truth to the Truth's self:
God will lend credit to my words this time.

It had got half through April, I arose
One vivid daybreak, — who had gone to bed
In the old way my wont those last three years,
Careless until, the cup drained, I should die.
The last sound in my ear, the over-night,
Had been a something let drop on the sly
In prattle by Margherita, "Soon enough
Gaieties end, now Easter 's past: a week,
And the Archbishop gets him back to Rome, —
Every one leaves the town for Rome, this Spring, —
Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and hope,
Resigns himself and follows with the flock."
I heard this drop and drop like rain outside
Fast-falling through the darkness while she spoke:
So had I heard with like indifference,
"And Michael's pair of wings will arrive first
At Rome, to introduce the company,
And bear him from our picture where he fights
Satan, — expect to have that dragon loose
And never a defender!" — my sole thought
Being still, as night came, "Done, another day!
How good to sleep and so get nearer death!" —
When, what, first thing at daybreak, pierced the sleep
With a summons to me? Up I sprang alive,
Light in me, light without me, everywhere
Change! A broad yellow sunbeam was let fall

From heaven to earth, — a sudden drawbridge lay,
Along which marched a myriad merry motes,
Mocking the flies that crossed them and recrossed
In rival dance, companions new-born too.
On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of weed
Shook diamonds on each dull gray lattice-square,
As first one, then another bird leapt by,
And light was off, and lo was back again,
Always with one voice, — where are two such joys? —
The blessed building-sparrow! I stepped forth,
Stood on the terrace, — o'er the roofs, such sky!
My heart sang, "I too am to go away,
I too have something I must care about,
Carry away with me to Rome, to Rome!
The bird brings hither sticks and hairs and wool,
And nowhere else i' the world; what fly breaks rank,
Falls out of the procession that befits,
From window here to window there, with all
The world to choose, — so well he knows his course?
I have my purpose and my motive too,
My march to Rome, like any bird or fly!
Had I been dead! How right to be alive!
Last night I almost prayed for leave to die,
Wished Guido all his pleasure with the sword
Or the poison, — poison, sword, was but a trick,
Harmless, may God forgive him the poor jest!
My life is charmed, will last till I reach Rome!
Yesterday, but for the sin, — ah, nameless be
The deed I could have dared against myself!
Now — see if I will touch an unripe fruit,
And risk the health I want to have and use!
Not to live, now, would be the wickedness, —
For life means to make haste and go to Rome
And leave Arezzo, leave all woes at once!"

Now, understand here, by no means mistake!
Long ago had I tried to leave that house
When it seemed such procedure would stop sin;
And still failed more the more I tried — at first
The Archbishop, as I told you, — next, our lord
The Governor, — indeed I found my way,
I went to the great palace where he rules,
Though I knew well 't was he who, — when I gave
A jewel or two, themselves had given me,
Back to my parents, — since they wanted bread,
They who had never let me want a nosegay, — he
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept
What was first theirs, then mine, so doubly theirs,
Though all the while my husband's most of all!
I knew well who had spoke the word wrought this:
Yet, being in extremity, I fled
To the Governor, as I say, — scarce opened lip
When — the cold cruel snicker close behind —
Guido was on my trace, already there,
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and smile,
And I — pushed back to him and, for my pains
Paid with . . . but why remember what is past?
I sought out a poor friar the people call
The Roman, and confessed my sin which came
Of their sin, — that fact could not be repressed, —
The frightfulness of my despair in God:
And, feeling, through the grate, his horror shake,
Implored him, "Write for me who cannot write,
Apprise my parents, make them rescue me!
You bid me be courageous and trust God:
Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust and write
'Dear friends, who used to be my parents once,
And now declare you have no part in me,
This is some riddle I want wit to solve,

Since you must love me with no difference.
Even suppose you altered, — there 's your hate,
To ask for : hate of you two dearest ones
I shall find liker love than love found here,
If husbands love their wives. Take me away
And hate me as you do the gnats and fleas,
Even the scorpions ! How I shall rejoice ! '
Write that and save me ! " And he promised — wrote
Or did not write ; things never changed at all :
He was not like the Augustinian here !
Last, in a desperation I appealed
To friends, whoever wished me better days,
To Guillichini, that 's of kin, — " What, I —
Travel to Rome with you ? A flying gout
Bids me deny my heart and mind my leg ! "
Then I tried Conti, used to brave — laugh back
The louring thunder when his cousin scowled
At me protected by his presence : " You —
Who well know what you cannot save me from, —
Carry me off ! What frightens you, a priest ? "
He shook his head, looked grave — " Above my strength !
Guido has claws that scratch, shows feline teeth ;
A formidabler foe than I dare fret :
Give me a dog to deal with, twice the size !
Of course I am a priest and Canon too,
But . . . by the bye . . . though both, not quite so bold
As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-priest,
The personage in such ill odor here
Because of the reports — pure birth o' the brain !
Our Caponsacchi, he 's your true Saint George
To slay the monster, set the Princess free,
And have the whole High-Altar to himself :
I always think so when I see that piece

I' the Pieve, that 's his church and mine, you know:
Though you drop eyes at mention of his name!"

That name had got to take a half-grotesque
Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,
Like any by-word, broken bit of song
Born with a meaning, changed by mouth and mouth
That mix it in a sneer or smile, as chance
Bids, till it now means naught but ugliness
And perhaps shame.

— All this intends to say,
That, over-night, the notion of escape
Had seemed distemper, dreaming; and the name, —
Not the man, but the name of him, thus made
Into a mockery and disgrace, — why, she
Who uttered it persistently, had laughed,
"I name his name, and there you start and wince
As criminal from the red tongs' touch!" — yet now,
Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me bright,
Choosing which butterfly should bear my news, —
The white, the brown one, or that tinier blue, —
The Margherita, I detested so,
In she came — "The fine day, the good Spring time!
What, up and out at window? That is best.
No thought of Caponsacchi? — who stood there
All night on one leg, like the sentry crane,
Under the pelting of your water-spout —
Looked last look at your lattice ere he leave
Our city, bury his dead hope at Rome.
Ay, go to looking-glass and make you fine,
While he may die ere touch one least loose hair
You drag at with the comb in such a rage!"

I turned — "Tell Caponsacchi he may come!"

"Tell him to come? Ah, but, for charity,
A truce to fooling! Come? What, — come this eve?
Peter and Paul! But I see through the trick!
Yes, come, and take a flower-pot on his head,
Flung from your terrace! No joke, sincere truth?"

How plainly I perceived hell flash and fade
O' the face of her, — the doubt that first paled joy,
Then, final reassurance I indeed
Was caught now, never to be free again!
What did I care? — who felt myself of force
To play with silk, and spurn the horsehair-springe.

"But — do you know that I have bade him come,
And in your name? I presumed so much,
Knowing the thing you needed in your heart.
But somehow — what had I to show in proof?
He would not come: half-promised, that was all,
And wrote the letters you refused to read.
What is the message that shall move him now?"

"After the Ave Maria, at first dark,
I will be standing on the terrace, say!"

"I would I had a good long lock of hair
Should prove I was not lying! Never mind!"

Off she went — "May he not refuse, that 's all —
Fearing a trick!"

I answered, "He will come."
And, all day, I sent prayer like incense up
To God the strong, God the beneficent,
God ever mindful in all strife and strait,

Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,
Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.
An old rhyme came into my head and rang
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God,
Hid herself, from the Paynims that pursued,
In a cave's heart; until a thunderstone,
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the couch and prey
And they laughed — "Thanks to lightning, ours at last!"
And she cried "Wrath of God, assert His love!
Servant of God, thou fire, befriend His child!"
And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its flash,
Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful sword
She brandished till pursuers strewed the ground,
So did the souls within them die away,
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded, safe,
She walked forth to the solitudes and Christ:
So should I grasp the lightning and be saved!

And still, as the day wore, the trouble grew
Whereby I guessed there would be born a star,
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked at last
Where the deliverer waited me: the same
Silent and solemn face, I first descried
At the spectacle, confronted mine once more.

So was that minute twice vouchsafed me, so
The manhood, wasted then, was still at watch
To save me yet a second time: no change
Here, though all else changed in the changing world!

I spoke on the instant, as my duty bade,
In some such sense as this, whatever the phrase.

"Friend, foolish words were borne from you to me;
Your soul behind them is the pure strong wind,
Not dust and feathers which its breath may bear:
These to the witless seem the wind itself,
Since proving thus the first of it they feel.
If by mischance you blew offence my way,
The straws are dropt, the wind desists no whit,
And how such strays were caught up in the street
And took a motion from you, why inquire?
I speak to the strong soul, no weak disguise.
If it be truth, — why should I doubt it truth? —
You serve God specially, as priests are bound,
And care about me, stranger as I am,
So far as wish my good, — that miracle
I take to intimate He wills you serve
By saving me, — what else can He direct?
Here is the service. Since a long while now,
I am in course of being put to death:
While death concerned nothing but me, I bowed
The head and bade, in heart, my husband strike.
Now I imperil something more, it seems,
Something that 's trulier me than this myself,
Something I trust in God and you to save.
You go to Rome, they tell me: take me there,
Put me back with my people!"

He replied —
The first word I heard ever from his lips,
All himself in it, — an eternity
Of speech, to match the immeasurable depth
O' the soul that then broke silence — "I am yours."

So did the star rise, soon to lead my step,
Lead on, nor pause before it should stand still

Above the House o' the Babe, — my babe to be,
That knew me first and thus made me know him,
That had his right of life and claim on mine,
And would not let me die till he was born,
But pricked me at the heart to save us both,
Saying "Have you the will? Leave God the way!"
And the way was Caponsacchi — "mine," thank God!
He was mine, he is mine, he will be mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light! I know,
Next night there was a cloud came, and not he:
But I prayed through the darkness till it broke
And let him shine. The second night, he came.

"The plan is rash; the project desperate:
In such a flight needs must I risk your life,
Give food for falsehood, folly or mistake,
Ground for your husband's rancor and revenge" —
So he began again, with the same face.
I felt that, the same loyalty — one star
Turning now red that was so white before —
One service apprehended newly: just
A word of mine and there the white was back!

"No, friend, for you will take me! 'T is yourself
Risk all, not I, — who let you, for I trust
In the compensating great God: enough!
I know you: when is it that you will come?"

"To-morrow at the day's dawn." Then I heard
What I should do: how to prepare for flight
And where to fly.

That night my husband bade
"— You, whom I loathe, beware you break my sleep

This whole night! Couch beside me like the corpse
I would you were!" The rest you know, I think —
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped.

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus Christ!
Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,
"He hath a devil" — say he was Thy saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show — unshroud
In Thine own time the glory of the soul
If aught obscure, — if ink-spot, from vile pens
Scribbling a charge against him — (I was glad
Then, for the first time, that I could not write) —
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,
'T is otherwise: let men take, sift my thoughts
— Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach!
I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die,
"Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!"
Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand
Holding my hand across the world, — a sense
That reads, as only such can read, the mark
God sets on woman, signifying so
She should — shall peradventure — be divine;
Yet 'ware, the while, how weakness mars the print
And makes confusion, leaves the thing men see,
— Not this man sees, — who from his soul, re-writes
The obliterated charter, — love and strength
Mending what 's marred. "So kneels a votarist,
Weeds some poor waste traditionary plot
Where shrine once was, where temple yet may be,
Purging the place but worshipping the while,
By faith and not by sight, sight clearest so, —
Such way the saints work," — says Don Celestine.
But I, not privileged to see a saint

Of old when such walked earth with crown and palm,
If I call "saint" what saints call something else —
The saints must bear with me, impute the fault
To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ignorance,
Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this year
Nor recognize the orb which Spring-flowers know.
But if meanwhile some insect with a heart
Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift joy —
Some fire-fly renounced Spring for my dwarfed cup,
Crept close to me, brought lustre for the dark,
Comfort against the cold, — what though excess
Of comfort should miscall the creature — sun?
What did the sun to hinder while harsh hands
Petal by petal, crude and colorless,
Tore me? This one heart gave me all the Spring!

Is all told? There 's the journey: and where 's time
To tell you how that heart burst out in shine?
Yet certain points do press on me too hard.
Each place must have a name, though I forget:
How strange it was — there where the plain begins
And the small river mitigates its flow —
When eve was fading fast, and my soul sank,
And he divined what surge of bitterness,
In overtaking me, would float me back
Whence I was carried by the striding day —
So, — "This gray place was famous once," said he —
And he began that legend of the place
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,
And told me all about a brave man dead,
Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
How did he know too, — at that town's approach
By the rock-side, — that in coming near the signs
Of life, the house-roofs and the church and tower,

I saw the old boundary and wall o' the world
Rise plain as ever round me, hard and cold,
As if the broken circlet joined again,
Tightened itself about me with no break, —
As if the town would turn Arezzo's self, —
The husband there, — the friends my enemies,
All ranged against me, not an avenue
To try, but would be blocked and drive me back
On him, — this other, . . . oh the heart in that!
Did not he find, bring, put into my arms
A new-born babe? — and I saw faces beam
Of the young mother proud to teach me joy,
And gossips round expecting my surprise
At the sudden hole through earth that lets in heaven.
I could believe himself by his strong will
Had woven around me what I thought the world
We went along in, every circumstance,
Towns, flowers and faces, all things helped so well!
For, through the journey, was it natural
Such comfort should arise from first to last?
As I look back, all is one milky way;
Still bettered more, the more remembered, so
Do new stars bud while I but search for old,
And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow him —
Him I now see make the shine everywhere.
Even at the last when the bewildered flesh,
The cloud of weariness about my soul
Clogging too heavily, sucked down all sense, —
Still its last voice was, "He will watch and care;
Let the strength go, I am content: he stays!"
I doubt not he did stay and care for all —
From that sick minute when the head swam round,
And the eyes looked their last and died on him,
As in his arms he caught me, and, you say,

Carried me in, that tragical red eve,
And laid me where I next returned to life
In the other red of morning, two red plates
That crushed together, crushed the time between,
And are since then a solid fire to me, —
When in, my dreadful husband and the world
Broke, — and I saw him, master, by hell's right,
And saw my angel helplessly held back
By guards that helped the malice — the lamb prone,
The serpent towering and triumphant — then
Came all the strength back in a sudden swell,
I did for once see right, do right, give tongue
The adequate protest: for a worm must turn
If it would have its wrong observed by God.
I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside
That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me, lay low
The neutralizer of all good and truth.
If I sinned so, — never obey voice more
O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us — "Bear!"
Not — "Stand by, bear to see my angels bear!"
I am clear it was on impulse to serve God
Not save myself, — no — nor my child unborn!
Had I else waited patiently till now? —
Who saw my old kind parents, silly-sooth
And too much trustful, for their worst of faults,
Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped and starved, cast out
Into the kennel: I remonstrated,
Then sank to silence, for, — their woes at end,
Themselves gone, — only I was left to plague.
If only I was threatened and belied,
What matter? I could bear it and did bear;
It was a comfort, still one lot for all:
They were not persecuted for my sake
And I, estranged, the single happy one.

But when at last, all by myself I stood
Obeying the clear voice which bade me rise,
Not for my own sake but my babe unborn,
And take the angel's hand was sent to help —
And found the old adversary athwart the path —
Not my hand simply struck from the angel's, but
The very angel's self made foul i' the face
By the fiend who struck there, — that I would not bear,
That only I resisted! So, my first
And last resistance was invincible.
Prayers move God; threats, and nothing else, move men!
I must have prayed a man as he were God
When I implored the Governor to right
My parents' wrongs: the answer was a smile.
The Archbishop, — did I clasp his feet enough,
Hide my face hotly on them, while I told
More than I dared make my own mother know?
The profit was — compassion and a jest.
This time, the foolish prayers were done with, right
Used might, and solemnized the sport at once.
All was against the combat: vantage, mine?
The runaway avowed, the accomplice-wife,
In company with the plan-contriving priest?
Yet, shame thus rank and patent, I struck, bare,
At foe from head to foot in magic mail,
And off it withered, cobweb-armory
Against the lightning! 'T was truth singed the lies
And saved me, not the vain sword nor weak speech!

You see, I will not have the service fail!
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
Others may want and wish, I wish nor want
One point o' the circle plainer, where I stand

Traced round about with white to front the world.
What of the calumny I came across,
What o' the way to the end? — the end crowns all.
The judges judged aright i' the main, gave me
The uttermost of my heart's desire, a truce
From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt,
With the quiet nuns, — God recompense the good!
Who said and sang away the ugly past.
And, when my final fortune was revealed,
What safety while, amid my parents' arms,
My babe was given me! Yes, he saved my babe:
It would not have peeped forth, the bird-like thing,
Through that Arezzo noise and trouble: back
Had it returned nor ever let me see!
But the sweet peace cured all, and let me live
And give my bird the life among the leaves
God meant him! Weeks and months of quietude,
I could lie in such peace and learn so much —
Begin the task, I see how needful now,
Of understanding somewhat of my past, —
Know life a little, I should leave so soon.
Therefore, because this man restored my soul,
All has been right; I have gained my gain, enjoyed
As well as suffered, — nay, got foretaste too
Of better life beginning where this ends —
All through the breathing-while allowed me thus,
Which let good premonitions reach my soul
Unthwarted, and benignant influence flow
And interpenetrate and change my heart,
Uncrossed by what was wicked, — nay, unkind.
For, as the weakness of my time drew nigh,
Nobody did me one disservice more,
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love
I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,

Born all in love, with naught to spoil the bliss
A whole long fortnight : in a life like mine
A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.
All women are not mothers of a boy,
Though they live twice the length of my whole life,
And, as they fancy, happily all the same.
There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,
As if it would continue, broaden out
Happily more and more, and lead to heaven :
Christmas before me, — was not that a chance ?
I never realized God's birth before —
How He grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
Lying a little on my breast like hers.
So all went on till, just four days ago —
The night and the tap.

Oh it shall be success
To the whole of our poor family ! My friends
. . . Nay, father and mother, — give me back my word !
They have been rudely stripped of life, disgraced
Like children who must needs go clothed too fine,
Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent.
If they too much affected frippery,
They have been punished and submit themselves,
Say no word : all is over, they see God
Who will not be extreme to mark their fault
Or He had granted respite : they are safe.

For that most woeful man my husband once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,
I — pardon him ? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.
Let him make God amends, — none, none to me

Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond : this blood of mine
Flies forth exultingly at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.
We shall not meet in this world nor the next,
But where will God be absent ? In His face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too :
Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed !
And as my presence was importunate, —
My earthly good, temptation and a snare, —
Nothing about me but drew somehow down
His hate upon me, — somewhat so excused
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth of him, —
May my evanishment for evermore
Help further to relieve the heart that cast
Such object of its natural loathing forth !
So he was made ; he nowise made himself :
I could not love him, but his mother did.
His soul has never lain beside my soul :
But for the unresisting body, — thanks !
He burned that garment spotted by the flesh.
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined : plague
It caught, and disinfection it had craved
Still but for Guido ; I am saved through him
So as by fire ; to him — thanks and farewell !

Even for my babe, my boy, there 's safety thence —
From the sudden death of me, I mean : we poor
Weak souls, how we endeavor to be strong !
I was already using up my life, —
This portion, now, should do him such a good,
This other go to keep off such an ill !

The great life; see, a breath and it is gone!
So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means so much.
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to His work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand He trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; He shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearlier: if my babe
Outlived the hour — and he has lived two weeks —
It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt He will explain in time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet shall be
Count Guido Franceschini's child at all —
Only his mother's, born of love not hate!
So shall I have my rights in after-time.
It seems absurd, impossible to-day;
So seems so much else, not explained but known!

Ah! Friends, I thank and bless you every one!
No more now: I withdraw from earth and man
To my own soul, compose myself for God.

Well, and there is more! Yes, my end of breath
Shall bear away my soul in being true!
He is still here, not outside with the world,
Here, here, I have him in his rightful place!
'T is now, when I am most upon the move,
I feel for what I verily find — again
The face, again the eyes, again, through all,
The heart and its immeasurable love

Of my one friend, my only, all my own,
Who put his breast between the spears and me.
Ever with Caponsacchi! Otherwise
Here alone would be failure, loss to me —
How much more loss to him, with life debarred
From giving life, love locked from love's display,
The day-star stopped its task that makes night morn!
O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
No work begun shall ever pause for death!
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I' the coming course, the new path I must tread —
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!
Tell him that if I seem without him now,
That 's the world's insight! Oh, he understands!
He is at Civita — do I once doubt
The world again is holding us apart?
He had been here, displayed in my behalf
The broad brow that reverberates the truth,
And flashed the word God gave him, back to man!
I know where the free soul is flown! My fate
Will have been hard for even him to bear:
Let it confirm him in the trust of God,
Showing how holily he dared the deed!
And, for the rest, — say, from the deed, no touch
Of harm came, but all good, all happiness,
Not one faint fleck of failure! Why explain?
What I see, oh, he sees and how much more!
Tell him, — I know not wherefore the true word
Should fade and fall unuttered at the last —
It was the name of him I sprang to meet
When came the knock, the summons and the end.
"My great heart, my strong hand are back again!"
I would have sprung to these, beckoning across
Murder and hell gigantic and distinct

O' the threshold, posted to exclude me heaven:
He is ordained to call and I to come!
Do not the dead wear flowers when dressed for God?
Say, — I am all in flowers from head to foot!
Say, — Not one flower of all he said and did,
Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade unknown,
But dropped a seed, has grown a balsam-tree
Whereof the blossoming perfumes the place
At this supreme of moments! He is a priest;
He cannot marry therefore, which is right:
I think he would not marry if he could.
Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,
Mere imitation of the inimitable:
In heaven we have the real and true and sure.
'Tis there they neither marry nor are given
In marriage but are as the angels: right,
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ
To say that! Marriage-making for the earth,
With gold so much, — birth, power, repute so much,
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who, apart,
Know themselves into one, are found at length
Married, but marry never, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at once
When the true time is: here we have to wait
Not so long neither! Could we by a wish
Have what we will and get the future now,
Would we wish aught done undone in the past?
So, let him wait God's instant men call years;
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise.

VIII.

DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE ARCHANGELIS,

PAUPERUM PROCURATOR.

[Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis regards the great Franceschini case simply as a fortunate chance for him to show off his superior skill as a lawyer, and thereby discomfit his rival, the Fisc. While his head is occupied in preparing what he considers a learned defence in support of the right of wounded honor to vindicate itself, based upon precedents drawn from animal life, and from Pagan and Christian custom, his heart is entirely occupied with his own domestic felicities.]

Ah, my Giacinto, he 's no ruddy rogue,
Is not Cinone ? What, to-day we 're eight ?
Seven and one 's eight, I hope, old curly-pate !
— Branches me out his verb-tree on the slate,
Amo –as –avi –atum –are –ans,
Up to *–aturus,* person, tense, and mood,
Quies me cum subjunctivo (I could cry)
And chews Corderius with his morning crust !
Look eight years onward, and he 's perched, he 's perched
Dapper and deft on stool beside this chair,
Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he ?
— Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty case
Like this, papa shall triturate full soon
To smooth Papinianian pulp !
It trots
Already through my head, though noon be now,

Does supper-time and what belongs to eve.
Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work then play!
— The proverb bids. And "then" means, won't we hold
Our little yearly lovesome frolic feast,
Cinuolo's birth-night, Cinicello's own,
That makes gruff January grin perforce!
For too contagious grows the mirth, the warmth
Escaping from so many hearts at once —
When the good wife, buxom and bonny yet,
Jokes the hale grandsire, — such are just the sort
To go off suddenly, — he who hides the key
O' the box beneath his pillow every night, —
Which box may hold a parchment (someone thinks)
Will show a scribbled something like a name
"Cinino, Ciniccino," near the end,
"To whom I give and I bequeath my lands,
Estates, tenements, hereditaments,
When I decease as honest grandsire ought."
Wherefore — yet this one time again perhaps —
Shan't my Orvieto fuddle his old nose!
Then, uncles, one or the other, well i' the world,
May — drop in, merely? — trudge through rain and wind,
Rather! The smell-feasts rouse them at the hint
There's cookery in a certain dwelling-place!
Gossips, too, each with keepsake in his poke,
Will pick the way, thrid lane by lantern-light,
And so find door, put galligaskin off
At entry of a decent domicile
Cornered in snug Condotti, — all for love,
All to crush cup with Cinucciatolo!
Well,
Let others climb the heights o' the court, the camp!

How vain are chambering and wantonness,
Revel and rout and pleasures that make mad!
Commend me to home-joy, the family board,
Altar and hearth! These, with a brisk career,
A source of honest profit and good fame,
Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust,
Just so much play as lets the heart expand,
Honoring God and serving man, — I say,
These are reality, and all else, — fluff,
Nutshell and naught, — thank Flaccus for the phrase!
Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor!

Why, work with a will, then! Wherefore lazy now?
Turn up the hour-glass, whence no sand-grain slips
But should have done its duty to the saint
O' the day, the son and heir that 's eight years old!
Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,
And Latin dumple Cinarello's chin,
The while we spread him fine and toss him flat
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim our mass
Of matter into Argument the First,
Prime Pleading in defence of our accused,
Which, once a-waft on paper wing, shall soar,
Shall signalize before applausive Rome
What study, and mayhap some mother-wit,
Can do toward making Master Fop and Fisc
Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.
Now, how good God is! How falls plumb to point
This murder, gives me Guido to defend
Now, of all days i' the year, just when the boy
Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
For some such illustration from his sire,
Stimulus to himself! One might wait years
And never find the chance which now finds me!

The fact is, there 's a blessing on the hearth,
A special providence for fatherhood !
Here 's a man, and what 's more, a noble, kills
— Not sneakingly but almost with parade —
Wife's father and wife's mother and wife's self
That 's mother's self of son and heir (like mine!)
— And here stand I, the favored advocate,
Who pluck this flower o' the field, no Solomon
Was ever clothed in glorious gold to match,
And set the same in Cinoncino's cap!
I defend Guido and his comrades — I !
Pray God, I keep me humble : not to me —
Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus !
How the fop chuckled when they made him Fisc!
We 'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for love,
All for our tribute to Cinotto's day.
Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent himself
May rub his eyes at the bustle, — ask " What 's this
Rolling from out the rostrum, as a gust
O' the *Pro Milone* had been prisoned there,
And rattled Rome awake ? " Awaken Rome,
How can the Pope doze on in decency ?
He needs must wake up also, speak his word,
Have his opinion like the rest of Rome,
About this huge, this hurly-burly case :
He wants who can excogitate the truth,
Give the result in speech, plain black and white,
To mumble in the mouth and make his own
— A little changed, good man, a little changed !
No matter, so his gratitude be moved,
By when my Giacintino gets of age,
Mindful of who thus helped him at a pinch,
Archangelus *Procurator Pauperum* —
And proved Hortensius *Redivivus !*

Whew!
To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced herb
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,
With here a goose-foot, there a cock's-comb stuck,
Cemented in an element of cheese!
I doubt if dainties do the grandsire good:
Last June he had a sort of strangling . . . bah!
He 's his own master, and his will is made.
So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly
As we rub hands o'er dish by way of grace!
May I lose cause if I vent one word more
Except, — with fresh-cut quill we ink the white, —
P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis. There!

Count Guido married — or, in Latin due,
What? *Duxit in uxorem?* — commonplace!
Tædas jugales iniit, subiit, — ha!
He underwent the matrimonial torch?
Connubio stabili sibi junxit, — hum!
In stable bond of marriage bound his own?
That 's clear of any modern taint: and yet . . .

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.
He shall attack me Terence with the dawn,
Shall Cinuccino! Mum, mind business, Sir!
Thus circumstantially evolve we facts,
Ita se habet ideo series facti:
He wedded, — ah, with owls for augury!
Nupserat, heu sinistris avibus,
One of the blood Arezzo boasts her best,
Dominus Guido, nobili genere ortus,
Pompiliæ . . .

But the version afterward!
Curb we this ardor! Notes alone, to-day,

The speech to-morrow and the Latin last:
Such was the rule in Farinacci's time.
Indeed I hitched it into verse and good.
Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,
Or else I think I too had poetized.
"Law is the pork substratum of the fry,
Goose-foot and cock's-comb are Latinity," —
And in this case, if circumstance assist,
We 'll garnish law with idiom, never fear!
Out-of-the-way events extend our scope:
For instance, when Bottini brings his charge,
"That letter which you say Pompilia wrote, —
To criminate her parents and herself
And disengage her husband from the coil, —
That, Guido Franceschini wrote, say we:
Because Pompilia could nor read nor write,
Therefore he pencilled her such letter first,
Then made her trace in ink the same again."
— Ha, my Bottini, have I thee on hip?
How will he turn this and break Tully's pate?
"*Existimandum*" (don't I hear the dog!)
"*Quod Guido designaverit elementa*
Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint
(*Superinducto ab ea calamo*)
Notata atramento" — there 's a style! —
"*Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat.*" Boh!
Now, my turn! Either, *Insulse!* (I outburst)
Stupidly put! Inane is the response,
Inanis est responsio, or the like —
To wit, that each of all those characters,
Quod singula elementa epistolæ,
Had first of all been traced for her by him,
Fuerant per eum prius designata,
And then, the ink applied a-top of that,

Et deinde, superinducto calamo,
The piece, she says, became her handiwork,
Per eam, efformata ut ipsa asserit.
Inane were such response! (a second time:)
Her husband outlined her the whole, forsooth?
Vir ejus lineabat epistolam?
What, she confesses that she wrote the thing,
Fatetur eam scripsisse, (scorn that scathes!)
That she might pay obedience to her lord?
Ut viro obtemperaret, apices
(Here repeat charge with proper varied phrase)
Eo designante, ipsaque calamum
Super inducente? By such argument,
Ita pariter, she seeks to show the same,
(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what saints you please)
Epistolam ostendit, medius fidius,
No voluntary deed but fruit of force!
Non voluntarie sed coacte scriptam!
That's the way to write Latin, friend my Fisc!
Bottini is a beast, one barbarous:
Look out for him when he attempts to say
"Armed with a pistol, Guido followed her!"
Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,
Cut away phrase by phrase from underfoot!
Guido Pompiliam — Guido thus his wife
Following with igneous engine, shall I have?
Armis munitus igneis persequens —
Arma sulphurea gestans, sulphury arms,
Or, might one style a pistol — popping-piece?
Armatus breviori sclopulo?
We'll let him have been armed so, though it make
Somewhat against us: I had thought to own —
Provided with a simple travelling-sword,
Ense solummodo viatorio

Instructus: but we 'll grant the pistol here:
Better we lost the cause than lacked the gird
At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's laugh!
It 's Venturini that decides for style.
Tommati rather goes upon the law.
So, as to law, —

Ah, but with law ne'er hope
To level the fellow, — don't I know his trick!
How he draws up, ducks under, twists aside!
He 's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which pretends
'T is ermine, pure soft snow from tail to snout.
He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,
Lets Latin glance off as he makes appeal
To saint that 's somewhere in the ceiling-top:
Do you suppose I don't conceive the beast?
Plague of the ermine-vermin! For it takes,
It takes, and here 's the fellow Fisc, you see,
And Judge, you 'll not be long in seeing next!
Confound the fop — he 's now at work like me:
Enter his study, as I seem to do,
Hear him read out his writing to himself!
I know he writes as if he spoke: I hear
The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes, neck shot-forth,
— I see him strain on tiptoe, soar and pour
Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at all —
Perorate in the air, then quick to press
With the product! What abuse of type and sheet!
He 'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-throw,
Let argument slide, and then deliver swift
Some bowl from quite an unguessed point of stand —
Having the luck o' the last word, the reply!
A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke:

You face a fellow — cries "So, there you stand?
But I discourteous jump clean o'er your head!
You take ship-carpentry for pilotage,
Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps through the breach,—
Hammer and fortify at puny points?
Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight and safe!
'T is here and here and here you ship a sea,
No good of your stopped leaks and littleness!"

Yet what do I name "little and a leak"?
The main defence o' the murder 's used to death,
By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap we pick:
Safer I worked the new, the unforeseen,
The nice by-stroke, the fine and improvised
Point that can titillate the brain o' the Bench
Torpid with over-teaching, long ago!
As if Tommati (that has heard, reheard
And heard again, first this side and then that —
Guido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido, din
And deafen, full three years, at each long ear)
Don't want amusement for instruction now,
Won't rather feel a flea run o'er his ribs,
Than a daw settle heavily on his head!
Oh I was young and had the trick of fence,
Knew subtle pass and push with careless right —
My left arm ever quiet behind back,
With dagger ready: not both hands to blade!
Puff and blow, put the strength out, Blunderbore!
There 's my subordinate, young Spreti, now,
Pedant and prig, — he 'll pant away at proof,
That 's his way!

Now for mine — to rub some life
Into one's choppy fingers this cold day!

I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards
The precious throat on which so much depends!
Guido must be all goose-flesh in his hole,
Despite the prison-straw: bad Carnival
For captives! no sliced fry for him, poor Count!

Carnival-time, — another providence!
The town a-swarm with strangers to amuse,
To edify, to give one's name and fame
In charge of, till they find, some future day,
Cintino come and claim it, his name too,
Pledge of the pleasantness they owe papa —
Who else was it cured Rome of her great qualms,
When she must needs have her own judgment? — ay,
When all her topping wits had set to work,
Pronounced already on the case: mere boys,
Twice Cineruggiolo's age with half his sense,
As good as tell me, when I cross the court,
"Master Arcangeli!" (plucking at my gown)
"We can predict, we comprehend your play,
We 'll help you save your client." Tra-la-la!
I 've travelled ground, from childhood to this hour,
To have the town anticipate my track?
The old fox takes the plain and velvet path,
The young hound's predilection, — prints the dew,
Don't he, to suit their pulpy pads of paw?
No! Burying nose deep down i' the briery bush,
Thus I defend Count Guido.
Where are we weak?
First, which is foremost in advantage too,
Our murder, — we call, killing, — is a fact
Confessed, defended, made a boast of: good!
To think the Fisc claimed use of torture here,
And got thereby avowal plump and plain

That gives me just the chance I wanted, — scope
Not for brute-force but ingenuity,
Explaining matters, not denying them !
One may dispute, — as I am bound to do,
And shall, — validity of process here :
Inasmuch as a noble is exempt
From torture which plebeians undergo
In such a case : for law is lenient, lax,
Remits the torture to a nobleman
Unless suspicion be of twice the strength
Attaches to a man born vulgarly :
We don't card silk with comb that dresses wool.
Moreover 't was severity undue
In this case, even had the lord been lout.
What utters, on this head, our oracle,
Our Farinacci, my Gamaliel erst,
In those immortal " Questions " ? This I quote :
" Of all the tools at Law's disposal, sure
That named *Vigiliarum* is the best —
That is, the worst — to whoso needs must bear :
Lasting, as it may do, from some seven hours
To ten ; (beyond ten, we 've no precedent ;
Certain have touched their ten, but, bah, they died !)
It does so efficaciously convince,
That, — speaking by much observation here, —
Out of each hundred cases, by my count,
Never I knew of patients beyond four
Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six
End by succumbing : only martyrs four,
Of obstinate silence, guilty or no, — against
Ninety-six full confessors, innocent
Or otherwise, — so shrewd a tool have we !
No marvel either : in unwary hands,
Death on the spot is no rare consequence :

As indeed all but happened in this case
To one of ourselves, our young tough peasant-friend
The accomplice called Baldeschi : they were rough,
Dosed him with torture as you drench a horse,
Not modify your treatment to a man :
So, two successive days he fainted dead,
And only on the third essay, gave up,
Confessed like flesh and blood. We could reclaim, —
Blockhead Bottini giving cause enough !
But no, — we 'll take it as spontaneously
Confessed : we 'll have the murder beyond doubt.
Ah, fortunate (the poet's word reversed)
Inasmuch as we know our happiness !
Had the antagonist left dubiety,
Here were we proving murder a mere myth,
And Guido innocent, ignorant, absent, — ay,
Absent ! He was — why, where should Christian be ?
Engaged in visiting his proper church,
The duty of us all at Christmas-time,
When Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung
To madness by his relegation, cast
About him and contrived a remedy
In murder : since opprobrium broke afresh,
By birth o' the babe, on him the imputed sire,
He it was quietly sought to smother up
His shame and theirs together, — killed the three,
And fled — (go seek him where you please to search)
Just at the time when Guido, touched by grace,
Devotions ended, hastened to the spot,
Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,
" Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace ! " —
And thus arrived i' the nick of time to catch
The charge o' the killing, though great-heartedly
He came but to forgive and bring to life.

Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the soul?
"Is thine eye evil because mine is good?"

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here
But for the full confession round and sound!
Thus might you wrong some kingly alchemist, —
Whose concern should not be with showing brass
Transmuted into gold, but triumphing,
Rather, about his gold changed out of brass,
Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,
But in the idea, the spiritual display,
The apparition buoyed by winged words
Hovering above its birth-place in the brain, —
Thus would you wrong this excellent personage
Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,
Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows, — in a word,
Demonstrate: when a faulty pipkin's crack
May disconcert you his presumptive truth!
Here were I hanging to the testimony
Of one of these poor rustics — four, ye gods!
Whom the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord
May drive into undoing my whole speech,
Undoing, on his birthday, — what is worse, —
My son and heir!
I wonder, all the same,
Not so much at those peasants' lack of heart;
But — Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
Bear pain no better! Everybody knows
It used once, when my father was a boy,
To form a proper, nay, important point
I' the education of our well-born youth,
That they took torture handsomely at need,
Without confessing in this clownish guise.
Each noble had his rack for private use,

And would, for the diversion of a guest,
Bid it be set up in the yard of arms,
And take thereon his hour of exercise, —
Command the varletry stretch, strain their best,
While friends looked on, admired my lord could smile
'Mid tugging which had caused an ox to roar.
Men are no longer men!
— And advocates
No longer Farinacci, let us add,
If I one more time fly from point proposed!
So, *Vindicatio*, — here begins the speech! —
Honoris causa; thus we make our stand:
Honor in us had injury, we prove.
Or if we fail to prove such injury
More than misprision of the fact, — what then?
It is enough, authorities declare,
If the result, the deed in question now,
Be caused by confidence that injury
Is veritable and no figment: since,
What, though proved fancy afterward, seemed fact
At the time, they argue shall excuse result.
That which we do, persuaded of good cause
For what we do, hold justifiable! —
So casuists bid: man, bound to do his best,
They would not have him leave that best undone
And mean to do his worst, — though fuller light
Show best was worst and worst would have been best.
Act by the present light! — they ask of man.
Ultra quod hic non agitur, besides,
It is not anyway our business here,
De probatione adulterii,
To prove what we thought crime was crime indeed,
Ad irrogandam pœnam, and require
Its punishment: such nowise do we seek:

Sed ad effectum, but 't is our concern,
Excusandi, here to simply find excuse,
Occisorem, for who did the killing-work,
Et ad illius defensionem, (mark
The difference) and defend the man, just that!
Quo casu levior proof
Exuberaret, to which end far lighter proof
Suffices than the prior case would claim:
It should be always harder to convict,
In short, than to establish innocence.
Therefore we shall demonstrate first of all
That Honor is a gift of God to man
Precious beyond compare: which natural sense
Of human rectitude and purity, —
Which white, man's soul is born with, — brooks no touch:
Therefore, the sensitivest spot of all,
Wounded by any wafture breathed from black,
Is, — honor within honor, like the eye
Centred i' the ball, — the honor of our wife.
Touch us o' the pupil of our honor, then,
Not actually, — since so you slay outright, —
But by a gesture simulating touch,
Presumable mere menace of such taint, —
This were our warrant for eruptive ire
"To whose dominion I impose no end."

(Virgil, now, should not be too difficult
To Cinoncino, — say, the early books.
Pen, truce to further gambols! *Poscimur!*)

Nor can revenge of injury done here
To the honor proved the life and soul of us,
Be too excessive, too extravagant:

Such wrong seeks and must have complete revenge.
Show we this, first, on the mere natural ground :
Begin at the beginning, and proceed
Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,
In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,
Propounds for basis of all household law —
I hardly recollect it, but it ends,
" Bird mates with bird, beast genders with his like,
And brooks no interference." Bird and beast ?
The very insects . . . if they wive or no,
How dare I say when Aristotle doubts ?
But the presumption is they likewise wive,
At least the nobler sorts ; for take the bee
As instance, — copying King Solomon, —
Why that displeasure of the bee to aught
Which savors of incontinency, makes
The unchaste a very horror to the hive ?
Whence comes it bees obtain their epithet
Of *castæ apes*, notably " the chaste " ?
Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,
(The young sage, — see his book of Table-talk)
" Such is their hatred of immodest act,
They fall upon the offender, sting to death."
I mind a passage much confirmative
I' the Idyllist (though I read him Latinized)
" Why," asks a shepherd, " is this bank unfit
For celebration of our vernal loves ? "
" Oh swain," returns the instructed shepherdess,
" Bees swarm here, and would quick resent our warmth ! "
Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct here,
Nor gain nor guard connubiality :
But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,
Do credit to their beasthood : witness him

That Ælian cites, the noble elephant,
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)
Who seeing, much offence beneath his nose,
His master's friend exceed in courtesy
The due allowance to his master's wife,
Taught them good manners and killed both at once,
Making his master and the world admire.
Indubitably, then, that master's self,
Favored by circumstance, had done the same
Or else stood clear rebuked by his own beast.
Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,
Who values his own honor not a straw, —
Et non recuperare curat, nor
Labors by might and main to salve its wound,
Se ulciscendo, by revenging him,
Nil differat a belluis, is a brute,
Quinimo irrationabilior
Ipsismet belluis, nay, contrariwise,
Much more irrational than brutes themselves,
Should be considered, *reputetur!* How?
If a poor animal feel honor smart,
Taught by blind instinct nature plants in him,
Shall man, — confessed creation's master-stroke,
Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god,
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here, —
Shall man prove the insensible, the block,
The blot o' the earth he crawls on to disgrace?
(Come, that 's both solid and poetic!) Man
Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,
Mean creeping cares about the animal life?
Absit such homage to vile flesh and blood!

(May Gigia have remembered, nothing stings
Fried liver out of its monotony

Of richness, like a root of fennel, chopped
Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs, I said —
Was there need I should say "and fennel too"?
But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!
To our argument! The fennel will be chopped.)

From beast to man next mount we — ay, but, mind,
Still mere man, not yet Christian, — that, in time!
Not too fast, mark you! 'T is on Heathen grounds
We next defend our act: then, fairly urge —
If this were done of old, in a green tree,
Allowed in the Spring rawness of our kind,
What may be licensed in the Autumn dry
And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of man?
If, with his poor and primitive half-lights,
The Pagan, whom our devils served for gods,
Could stigmatize the breach of marriage-vow
As that which blood, blood only might efface, —
Absolve the husband, outraged, whose revenge
Anticipated law, plied sword himself, —
How with the Christian in full blaze of noon?
Shall not he rather double penalty,
Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,
Let privilege be minished, droop, decay?
Therefore set forth at large the ancient law!
Superabundant the examples be
To pick and choose from. The Athenian Code,
Solon's, the name is serviceable, — then,
The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that fifteenth, —
"Romulus" likewise rolls out round and large;
The Julian; the Cornelian; Gracchus' Law:
So old a chime, the bells ring of themselves!
Spreti can set that going if he please,
I point you, for my part, the belfry plain,

Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,
Into the Christian day shall broaden next.

First, the fit compliment to His Holiness
Happily reigning: then sustain the point —
All that was long ago declared as law
By the natural revelation, stands confirmed
By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint, —
To-wit — that Honor is man's supreme good.
Why should I balk Saint Jerome of his phrase?
Ubi honor non est, where no honor is,
Ibi contemptus est; and where contempt,
Ibi injuria frequens; and where that,
The frequent injury, *ibi et indignatio;*
And where the indignation, *ibi quies*
Nulla: and where there is no quietude,
Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often cast
Down from the heights where it proposed to dwell,
Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.
And naturally the mind is so cast down,
Since harder 't is, *quum difficilius sit,*
Iram cohibere, to coerce one's wrath,
Quam miracula facere, than work miracles, —
So Gregory smiles in his First Dialogue.
Whence we infer, the ingenuous soul, the man
Who makes esteem of honor and repute,
Whenever honor and repute are touched,
Arrives at term of fury and despair,
Loses all guidance from the reason-check:
As in delirium or a frenzy-fit,
Nor fury nor despair he satiates, — no,
Not even if he attain the impossible,
O'erturn the hinges of the universe
To annihilate — not whoso caused the smart

Solely, the author simply of his pain,
But the place, the memory, *vituperii*,
O' the shame and scorn : *quia*, — says Solomon,
(The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth
In Proverbs, the sixth chapter near the end)
— Because, the zeal and fury of a man,
Zelus et furor viri, will not spare,
Non parcet, in the day of his revenge,
In die vindictæ, nor will acquiesce,
Nec acquiescet, through a person's prayers,
Cujusdam precibus, — *nec suscipiet*,
Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for
Redemption, *dona plurium*, gifts of friends,
Mere money-payment to compound for ache.
Who recognizes not my client's case ?
Whereto, as strangely consentaneous here,
Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle writ
To Robertulus, his nephew : " Too much grief,
Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat,
Does not excogitate propriety,
Non verecundatur, nor knows shame at all,
Non consulit rationem, nor consults
Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*
Damnum, nor dreads the loss of dignity ;
Modum et ordinem, order and the mode,
Ignorat, it ignores " : why, trait for trait,
Was ever portrait limned so like the life ?
(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say ?
I hear he 's first in reputation now.)
Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred Text
That 's not so much the portrait as the man !
Samson in Gaza was the antetype
Of Guido at Rome : observe the Nazarite !
Blinded he was, — an easy thing to bear :

Intrepidly he took imprisonment,
Gyves, stripes and daily labor at the mill:
But when he found himself, i' the public place,
Destined to make the common people sport,
Disdain burned up with such an impetus
I' the breast of him that, all the man one fire,
Moriatur, roared he, let my soul's self die,
Anima mea, with the Philistines!
So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death and all,
Multosque plures interfecit, ay,
And many more he killed thus, *moriens*,
Dying, *quam vivus*, than in his whole life,
Occiderat, he ever killed before.
Are these things writ for no example, Sirs?
One instance more, and let me see who doubts!
Our Lord Himself, made all of mansuetude,
Sealing the sum of sufferance up, received
Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting
Without complaint: but when He found Himself
Touched in His honor never so little for once,
Then outbroke indignation pent before —
"*Honorem meum nemini dabo!*" "No,
My honor I to nobody will give!"
And certainly the example so hath wrought
That whosoever, at the proper worth,
Apprises worldly honor and repute,
Esteems it nobler to die honored man
Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries
Disgraced in the eye o' the world. We find Saint Paul
No recreant to this faith delivered once:
"Far worthier were it that I died," cries he,
Expedit mihi magis mori, "than
That anyone should make my glory void,"

Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet!
See, *ad Corinthienses:* whereupon
Saint Ambrose makes a comment with much fruit,
Doubtless my Judges long since laid to heart,
So I desist from bringing forward here.
(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved
Satis superque, both enough and to spare,
That Revelation old and new admits
The natural man may effervesce in ire,
O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with foamy rage,
At the first puncture to his self-respect?
Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this law-bud
Full-blown now, soon to bask the absolute flower
Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day, —
Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-streak,
One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,
One dew-drop comfort to humanity,
Now that the chalice teems with noonday wine?
Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge —
Referring just to what makes out our case!
Under old dispensation, argue they,
The doom of the adulterous wife was death,
Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone her not,
Put her away!" next legislates our Lord;
And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a wife!"
Ordains the Church, "she typifies ourself,
The Bride no fault shall cause to fall from Christ."
Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law
Has passed away — which who presumes to doubt?
As not one word of Christ is rendered vain —
Which, could it be though heaven and earth should pass?
— Where do I find my proper punishment

For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask
Of my infallible Pope, — who now remits
Even the divorce allowed by Christ in lieu
Of lapidation Moses licensed me?
The Gospel checks the Law which throws the stone,
The Church tears the divorce-bill Gospel grants:
Shall wives sin and enjoy impunity?
What profits me the fulness of the days,
The final dispensation, I demand,
Unless Law, Gospel and the Church subjoin
"But who hath barred thee primitive revenge,
Which, like fire damped and dammed up, burns more fierce?
Use thou thy natural privilege of man,
Else wert thou found like those old ingrate Jews,
Despite the manna-banquet on the board,
A-longing after melons, cucumbers,
And such like trash of Egypt left behind!"

(There was one melon had improved our soup:
But did not Cinoncino need the rind
To make a boat with? So I seem to think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church — from these we leap
To the very last revealment, easy rule
Befitting the well-born and thorough-bred
O' the happy day we live in, not the dark
O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.
"Behold," quoth James, "we bridle in a horse
And turn his body as we would thereby!"
Yea, but we change the bit to suit the growth,
And rasp our colt's jaw with a rugged spike,
We hasten to remit our managed steed
Who wheels round at persuasion of a touch.
Civilization bows to decency,

The acknowledged use and wont: 't is manners, — mild
But yet imperative law, — which make the man.
Thus do we pay the proper compliment
To rank, and that society of Rome,
Hath so obliged us by its interest,
Taken our client's part instinctively,
As unaware defending its own cause.
What *dictum* doth Society lay down
I' the case of one who hath a faithless wife?
Wherewithal should the husband cleanse his way?
Be patient and forgive? Oh, language fails, —
Shrinks from depicturing his turpitude!
For if wronged husband raise not hue and cry,
Quod si maritus de adulterio non
Conquereretur, he 's presumed a — foh!
Presumitur leno: so, complain he must.
But how complain? At your tribunal, lords?
Far weightier challenge suits your sense, I wot!
You sit not to have gentlemen propose
Questions gentility can itself discuss.
Did not you prove that to our brother Paul?
The Abate, *quam judicialiter*
Prosequeretur, when he tried the law,
Guidonis causam, in Guido's case,
Accidit ipsi, this befell himself,
Quod risum moverit et cachinnos, that
He moved to mirth and cachinnation, all
Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus*
Etiam sensatis et cordatis, men
Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, the very Court,
Ipsismet in judicibus, I might add,
Non tamen dicam. In a cause like this,
So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *con*,
Delicate, intertwisted and obscure,

That Law refused loan of a finger-tip
To unravel, re-adjust the hopeless twine,
Since, half-a-dozen steps outside Law's seat,
There stood a foolish trifler with a tool
A-dangle to no purpose by his side,
Had clearly cut the embroilment in a trice.
Asserunt enim unanimiter
Doctores, for the Doctors all assert,
That husbands, *quod mariti*, must be held
Viles, cornuti reputantur, vile,
Fronts branching forth a florid infamy,
Si propriis manibus, if with their own hands,
Non sumunt, they fail straight to take revenge,
Vindictam, but expect the deed be done
By the Court — *expectant illam fieri*
Per judices, qui summopere rident, which
Gives an enormous guffaw for reply,
Et cachinnantur. For he ran away,
Deliquit enim, just that he might 'scape
The censure of both counsellors and crowd,
Ut vulgi et doctorum evitaret
Censuram, and lest so he superadd
To loss of honor ignominy too,
Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam
Amisso honori superadderet.
My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate step
Was — we referred ourselves to Law at all!
Twit me not with "Law else had punished you!"
Each punishment of the extra-legal step,
To which the high-born preferably revert,
Is ever for some oversight, some slip
I' the taking vengeance, not for vengeance' self.
A good thing, done unhandsomely, turns ill;
And never yet lacked ill the law's rebuke.

For pregnant instance, let us contemplate
The luck of Leonardus, — see at large
Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.
This Leonard finds his wife is false: what then?
He makes her own son snare her, and entice
Out of the town walls to a private walk
Wherein he slays her with commodity.
They find her body half-devoured by dogs:
Leonard is tried, convicted, punished, sent
To labor in the galleys seven years long:
Why? For the murder? Nay, but for the mode!
Malus modus occidendi, ruled the Court,
An ugly mode of killing, nothing more!
Another fructuous sample, — see "*De Re Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine piece.
Another husband, in no better plight,
Simulates absence, thereby tempts his wife;
On whom he falls, out of sly ambuscade,
Backed by a brother of his, and both of them
Armed to the teeth with arms that law had blamed.
Nimis dolose, overwilily,
Fuisse operatum, did they work,
Pronounced the law: had all been fairly done
Law had not found him worthy, as she did,
Of four years' exile. Why cite more? Enough
Is good as a feast — (unless a birthday-feast
For one's Cinuccio) so, we finish here.
My lords, we rather need defend ourselves
Inasmuch as, for a twinkling of an eye,
We hesitatingly appealed to law, —
Than need deny that, on mature advice,
We blushingly bethought us, bade revenge
Back to its simple proper private way
Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.

Judges, here is the law, and here beside,
The testimony! Look to it!
Pause and breathe!
So far is only too plain; we must watch:
Bottini will scarce hazard an attack
Here: best anticipate the fellow's play,
And guard the weaker places — warily ask,
What if considerations of a sort,
Reasons of a kind, arise from out the strange
Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance
Of this our (candor owns) abnormal act,
To bar the right of us revenging so?
"Impunity were otherwise your meed:
Go slay your wife and welcome," — may be urged, —
"But why the innocent old couple slay,
Pietro, Violante? You may do enough,
Not too much, not exceed the golden mean:
Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gentile, Jew,
Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the mode,
Is justified to push revenge so far."

No, indeed? Why, thou very sciolist!
The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to do,
Was virtual wrong done by the parents here —
Imposing her upon us as their child —
Themselves allow: then, her fault was their fault,
Her punishment be theirs accordingly!
But wait a little, sneak not off so soon!
Was this cheat solely harm to Guido, pray?
The precious couple you call innocent, —
Why, they were felons that Law failed to clutch,
Qui ut fraudarent, who that they might rob,
Legitime vocatos, folk law called,
Ad fidei commissum, true heirs to the Trust,

Partum supposuerunt, feigned this birth,
Immemores reos factos esse, blind
To the fact that, guilty, they incurred thereby,
Ultimi supplicii, hanging or what 's worse.
Do you blame us that we turn Law's instruments,
Not mere self-seekers, — mind the public weal,
Nor make the private good our sole concern ?
That having — shall I say — secured a thief,
Not simply we recover from his pouch
The stolen article our property,
But also pounce upon our neighbor's purse
We opportunely find reposing there,
And do him justice while we right ourselves ?
He owes us, for our part, a drubbing say,
But owes our neighbor just a dance i' the air
Under the gallows : so, we throttle him.
That neighbor's Law, that couple are the Thief,
We are the over ready to help Law —
Zeal of her house hath eaten us up : for which,
Can it be, Law intends to eat up us,
Crudum Priamum, devour poor Priam raw,
('T was Jupiter's own joke) with babes to boot,
Priamique pisinnos, in Homeric phrase ?
Shame ! —— and so ends my period prettily.

But even, — prove the pair not culpable,
Free as unborn babe from connivance at,
Participation in, their daughter's fault :
Ours the mistake. Is that a rare event ?
Non semel, it is anything but rare,
In contingentia facti, that by chance,
Impunes evaserunt, go scot-free,
Qui, such well-meaning people as ourselves,
Justo dolore moti, who aggrieved

With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, lay
Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wrong heads.
Cite we an illustrative case in point:
Mulier Smirnea quædam, good my lords,
A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna once,
Virum et filium ex eo conceptum, who
Both husband and her son begot by him
Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because,
Vir filium suum perdiderat, her spouse
Had been beforehand with her, killed her son,
Matrimonii primi, of a previous bed.
Deinde accusata, then accused,
Apud Dolabellam, before him that sat
Proconsul, *nec duabus cædibus*
Contaminatam liberare, nor
To liberate a woman doubly-dyed
With murder, *voluit*, made he up his mind,
Nec condemnare, nor to doom to death,
Justo dolore impulsam, one impelled
By just grief; *sed remisit*, but sent her up
Ad Areopagum, to the Hill of Mars,
Sapientissimorum judicum
Cœtum, to that assembly of the sage
Paralleled only by my judges here;
Ubi, cognito de causa, where, the cause
Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave reply,
Ut ipsa et accusator, that both sides
O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back again,
Post centum annos, after a hundred years,
For judgment; *et sic*, by which sage decree,
Duplici parricidio rea, one
Convicted of a double parricide,
Quamvis etiam innocentem, though in truth
Out of the pair, one innocent at least

She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,
Undequaque, yet she altogether 'scaped,
Evasit impunis. See the case at length
In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,
That eighth book of his Memorable Facts.
Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark:
Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat,
Just so, a lady who had taken care,
Homicidium viri, that her lord be killed,
Ex denegatione debiti,
For denegation of a certain debt,
Matrimonialis, he was loth to pay,
Fuit pecuniaria mulcta, was
Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,
Punita, et ad pœnam, and to pains,
Temporalem, for a certain space of time,
In monasterio, in a convent.

(Ay,
In monasterio! He mismanages
In with the ablative, the accusative!
I had hoped to have hitched the villain into verse
For a gift, this very day, a complete list
O' the prepositions each with proper case,
Telling a story, long was in my head.
"What prepositions take the accusative?
Ad to or at — *who saw the cat?* — down to
Ob, for, because of, *keep her claws off!*" Tush!
Law in a man takes the whole liberty:
The muse is fettered: just as Ovid found!)

And now, sea widens and the coast is clear.
What of the dubious act you bade excuse?

Surely things broaden, brighten, till at length
Remains — so far from act that needs defence —
Apology to make for act delayed
One minute, let alone eight mortal months
Of hesitation! "Why procrastinate?"
(Out with it my Bottinius, ease thyself!)
"Right, promptly done, is twice right: right delayed
Turns wrong. We grant you should have killed your wife,
But killed o' the moment, at the meeting her
In company with the priest: then did the tongue
O' the Brazen Head give license, 'Time is now!'
Wait to make mind up? 'Time is past' it peals.
Friend, you are competent to mastery
O' the passions that confessedly explain
An outbreak: you allow an interval,
And then break out as if time's clock still clanged.
You have forfeited your chance, and flat you fall
Into the commonplace category
Of men bound to go softly all their days,
Obeying Law."
Now, which way make response?
What was the answer Guido gave, himself?
— That so to argue came of ignorance
How honor bears a wound. "For, wound," said he,
"My body, and the smart soon mends and ends:
While, wound my soul where honor sits and rules,
Longer the sufferance, stronger grows the pain,
Being *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first."
But try another tack, urge common sense
By way of contrast: say — Too true, my lords!
We did demur, awhile did hesitate:
Since husband sure should let a scruple speak
Ere he slay wife, — for his own safety, lords!

Carpers abound in this misjudging world :
Moreover, there 's a nicety in law
That seems to justify them should they carp.
Suppose the source of injury a son, —
Father may slay such son yet run no risk :
Why graced with such a privilege ? Because
A father so incensed with his own child,
Or must have reason, or believe he has :
Quia semper, seeing that in such event,
Presumitur, the law is bound suppose,
Quod capiat pater, that the sire must take,
Bonum consilium pro filio,
The best course as to what befits his boy,
Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere love,
Amoris, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;
Quam confidentiam, which confidence,
Non habet, law declines to entertain,
De viro, of the husband : where finds he
An instinct that compels him love his wife?
Rather is he presumably her foe.
So, let him ponder long in this bad world
Ere do the simplest act of justice.

But
Again — and here we brush Bottini's breast —
Object you, " See the danger of delay !
Suppose a man murdered my friend last month :
Had I come up and killed him for his pains
In rage, I had done right, allows the law :
I meet him now and kill him in cold blood,
I do wrong, equally allows the law :
Wherein do actions differ, yours and mine ? "
In plenitudine intellectus es ?
Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such slayer's life,

Returns it life to thy slain friend at all?
Had he stolen ring instead of stabbing friend, —
To-day, to-morrow or next century,
Meeting the thief, thy ring upon his thumb,
Thou justifiably hadst wrung it thence:
So, couldst thou wrench thy friend's life back again,
Though prisoned in the bosom of his foe.
Why, law would look complacent on thy wrath.
Our case is, that the thing we lost, we found:
The honor, we were robbed of eight months since,
Being recoverable at any day
By death of the delinquent. Go thy ways!
Ere thou hast learned law, will be much to do,
As said the gaby while he shod the goose.
Nay, if you urge me, interval was none!
From the inn to the villa — blank or else a bar
Of adverse and contrarious incident
Solid between us and our just revenge!
What with the priest who flourishes his blade,
The wife who like a fury flings at us,
The crowd — and then the capture, the appeal
To Rome, the journey there, the jaunting thence
To shelter at the House of Convertites,
The visits to the Villa, and so forth,
Where was one minute left us all this while
To put in execution that revenge
We planned o' the instant? — as it were, plumped down
O' the spot, some eight months since, which round sound egg,
Rome, more propitious than our nest, should hatch!
Object not, "You reached Rome on Christmas-eve,
And, despite liberty to act at once,
Waited a whole and indecorous week!"
Hath so the Molinism, the canker, lords,

Eaten to our bone? Is no religion left?
No care for aught held holy by the Church?
What, would you have us skip and miss those Feasts
O' the Natal Time, must we go prosecute
Secular business on a sacred day?
Should not the merest charity expect,
Setting our poor concerns aside for once,
We hurried to the song matutinal
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for the Mass
The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo chaunts,
Then rushed on to the blessing of the Hat
And Rapier, which the Pope sends to what prince
Has done most detriment to the Infidel —
And thereby whetted courage if 't were blunt?
Meantime, allow we kept the house a week,
Suppose not we were idle in our mew!
Picture us raging here and raving there —
"'Money?' I need none. 'Friends?' The word is null.
Restore the white was on that shield of mine
Borne at" . . . wherever might be shield to bear.
"I see my grandsire, he who fought so well
At" . . . here find out and put in time and place,
Or else invent the fight his grandsire fought:
"I see this! I see that!"

(See nothing else,
Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an hour!
What to the uncle, as I bid advance
The smoking dish? "Fry suits a tender tooth!
Behoves we care a little for our kin —
You, Sir, — who care so much for cousinship
As come to your poor loving nephew's feast!"
He has the reversion of a long lease yet —
Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's fry, I know!)

Here fall to be considered those same six
Qualities; what Bottini needs must call
So many aggravations of our crime,
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's back.
We summarily might dispose of such
By some off-hand and jaunty fling, some skit —
"So, since there 's proved no crime to aggravate,
A fico for your aggravations, Fisc!"
No, — handle mischief rather, — play with spells
Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh the while
We show that did he rise we stand his match!
Therefore, first aggravation: we made up —
Over and above our simple murderous selves —
A regular assemblage of armed men,
Coadunatio armatorum, — ay,
Unluckily it was the very judge
That sits in judgment on our cause to-day
Who passed the law as Governor of Rome:
"Four men armed,"—though for lawful purpose, mark!
Much more for an acknowledged crime, — "shall die."
We five were armed to the teeth, meant murder too?
Why, that 's the very point that saves us, Fisc!
Let me instruct you. Crime nor done nor meant, —
You punish still who arm and congregate:
For wherefore use bad means to a good end?
Crime being meant not done, — you punish still
The means to crime, whereon you haply pounce,
Though accident have balked them of effect.
But crime not only compassed but complete,
Meant and done too? Why, since you have the end,
Be that your sole concern, nor mind those means
No longer to the purpose! Murdered we?
(— Which, that our luck was in the present case,
Quod contigisse in præsenti casu,

Is palpable, *manibus palpatum est* —)
Make murder out against us, nothing else!
Of many crimes committed with a view
To one main crime, Law overlooks the less,
Intent upon the large. Suppose a man
Having in view commission of a theft,
Climbs the town-wall: 't is for the theft he hangs,
In case he stands convicted of such theft:
Law remits whipping, due to who clomb wall
Through bravery or wantonness alone,
Just to dislodge a daw's nest, plant a flag.
So I interpret you the manly mind
Of him about to judge both you and me, —
Our Governor, who, being no Fisc, my Fisc,
Cannot have blundered on ineptitude!
Next aggravation, — that the arms themselves
Were specially of such forbidden sort
Through shape or length or breadth, as, prompt, Law plucks
From single hand of solitary man,
Making him pay the carriage with his life:
Delatio armorum, arms against the rule,
Contra formam constitutionis, of
Pope Alexander's blessed memory.
Such are the poignards with the double prong,
Horn-like, when times make bold the antlered buck,
Each prong of brittle glass — wherewith to stab
And break off short and so let fragment stick
Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery:
Such being the Genoese blade with hooked edge
That did us service at the villa here.
Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,
But, — let so rare a personage forgive, —
Fisc, thy objection is a foppery!

Thy charge runs that we killed three innocents:
Killed, dost see? Then, if killed, what matter how?
By stick or stone, by sword or dagger, tool
Long or tool short, round or triangular —
Poor slain folk find small comfort in the choice!
Means to an end, means to an end, my Fisc!
Nature cries out, "Take the first arms you find!
Furor ministrat arma: where 's a stone?
Unde mî lapidem, where darts for me?
Unde sagittas? But subdue the bard
And rationalize a little. Eight months since,
Had we, or had we not, incurred your blame
For letting 'scape unpunished this bad pair?
I think I proved that in last paragraph!
Why did we so? Because our courage failed.
Wherefore? Through lack of arms to fight the foe:
We had no arms or merely lawful ones,
An unimportant sword and blunderbuss,
Against a foe, pollent in potency,
The *amasius,* and our vixen of a wife.
Well then, how culpably do we gird loin
And once more undertake the high emprise,
Unless we load ourselves this second time
With handsome superfluity of arms,
Since better is "too much" than "not enough,"
And "*plus non vitiat,*" too much does no harm,
Except in mathematics, sages say.
Gather instruction from the parable!
At first we are advised — "A lad hath here
Seven barley loaves and two small fishes: what
Is that among so many?" Aptly asked:
But put that question twice and, quite as apt,
The answer is "Fragments, twelve baskets full!"

And, while we speak of superabundance, fling
We word by the way to fools who cast their flout
On Guido — "Punishment were pardoned him,
But here the punishment exceeds offence:
He might be just, but he was cruel too!"
Why, grant there seems a kind of cruelty
In downright stabbing people he could maim,
(If so you stigmatize the stern and strict)
Still, Guido meant no cruelty — may plead
Transgression of his mandate, over-zeal
O' the part of his companions: all he craved
Was, they should fray the faces of the folk,
Merely disfigure, nowise make them die.
Solummodo fassus est, he owns no more,
Dedisse mandatum, than that he desired,
Ad sfrisiandum, dicam, that they hack
And hew, i' the customary phrase, his wife,
Uxorem tantum, and no harm beside.
If his instructions then be misconceived,
Nay, disobeyed, impute you blame to him?
Cite me no Panicollus to the point,
As adverse! Oh, I quite expect his case —
How certain noble youths of Sicily
Having good reason to mistrust their wives,
Killed them and were absolved in consequence:
While others who had gone beyond the need
By mutilation of each paramour —
As Galba in the Horatian satire grieved
— These were condemned to the galleys, cast for guilt
Exceeding simple murder of a wife.
But why? Because of ugliness, and not
Cruelty, in the said revenge, I trow!
Ex causa abscissionis partium;
Qui nempe id facientes reputantur

Naturæ inimici, man revolts
Against them as the natural enemy.
Pray, grant to one who meant to slit the nose
And slash the cheek and slur the mouth, at most,
A somewhat more humane award than these
Obtained, these natural enemies of man!
Objectum funditus corruit, flat you fall,
My Fisc! I waste no kick on you, but pass.

Third aggravation: that our act was done —
Not in the public street, where safety lies,
Not in the bye-place, caution may avoid,
Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for crime, —
But in the very house, home, nook and nest,
O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-place,
In domo ac habitatione propria,
Where all presumably is peace and joy.
The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a pest
When, creeping from congenial cottage, she
Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify
His household more, i' the palace of the king.
All three were housed and safe and confident.
Moreover, the permission that our wife
Should have at length *domum pro carcere*,
Her own abode in place of prison — why,
We ourselves granted, by our other self
And proxy Paolo: did we make such grant,
Meaning a lure? — elude the vigilance
O' the jailer, lead her to commodious death,
While we ostensibly relented?
Ay,
Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc!
Is vengeance lawful? We demand our right,
But find it will be questioned or refused

By jailer, turnkey, hangdog, — what know we? 1260
Pray, how is it we should conduct ourselves?
To gain our private right — break public peace,
Do you bid us? — trouble order with our broils?
Endanger . . . shall I shrink to own . . . ourselves? —
Who want no broken head nor bloody nose
(While busied slitting noses, breaking heads)
From the first tipstaff that may interfere!
Nam quicquid sit, for howsoever it be,
An de consensu nostro, if with leave
Or not, *a monasterio*, from the nuns, 1270
Educta esset, she had been led forth,
Potuimus id dissimulare, we
May well have granted leave in pure pretence,
Ut aditum habere, that thereby
An entry we might compass, a free move
Potuissemus, to her easy death,
Ad eam occidendam. Privacy
O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home, say you?
Shall we give man's abode more privilege 1279
Than God's? — for in the churches where He dwells
In quibus assistit Regum Rex, by means
Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the same,
Et nihilominus, therein, *in eis*,
Ex justa via delinquens, whoso dares
To take a liberty on ground enough,
Is pardoned, *excusatur:* that's our case —
Delinquent through befitting cause. You hold,
To punish a false wife in her own house
Is graver than, what happens every day,
To hale a debtor from his hiding-place 1290
In church protected by the Sacrament?
To this conclusion have I brought my Fisc?
Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air their nests;

Praise you the impiety that follows, Fisc?
Shall false wife yet have where to lay her head?
"*Contra Fiscum definitum est!*" He's done!
"*Surge et scribe,*" make a note of it!
— If I may dally with Aquinas' word.

Or in the death-throe does he mutter still,
Fourth aggravation, that we changed our garb,
And rusticized ourselves with uncouth hat,
Rough vest and goatskin wrappage; murdered thus
Mutatione vestium, in disguise,
Whereby mere murder got complexed with wile,
Turned *homicidium ex insidiis?* Fisc,
How often must I round thee in the ears—
All means are lawful to a lawful end?
Concede he had the right to kill his wife:
The Count indulged in a travesty; why?
De illa ut vindictam sumeret,
That on her he might lawful vengeance take,
Commodius, with more ease, *et tutius*,
And safelier: wants he warrant for the step?
Read to thy profit how the Apostle once
For ease and safety, when Damascus raged,
Was let down in a basket by the wall
To 'scape the malice of the governor
(Another sort of Governor boasts Rome!)
— Many are of opinion, — covered close,
Concealed with — what except that very cloak
He left behind at Troas afterward?
I shall not add a syllable: Molinists may!
Well, have we more to manage? Ay, indeed!
Fifth aggravation, that our wife reposed
Sub potestate judicis, beneath
Protection of the judge, — her house was styled

A prison, and his power became its guard
In lieu of wall and gate and bolt and bar.
This is a tough point, shrewd, redoubtable:
Because we have to supplicate that judge
Shall overlook wrong done the judgment-seat.
Now, I might suffer my own nose be pulled,
As man: but then as father . . . if the Fisc
Touched one hair of my boy who held my hand
In confidence he could not come to harm
Crossing the Corso, at my own desire,
Going to see those bodies in the church —
What would you say to that, Don Hyacinth?
This is the sole and single knotty point:
For, bid Tommati blink his interest,
You laud his magnanimity the while:
But balk Tommati's office, — he talks big!
"My predecessors in the place, — those sons
O' the prophets that may hope succeed me here, —
Shall I diminish their prerogative?
Count Guido Franceschini's honor! — well,
Has the Governor of Rome none?"

You perceive,
The cards are all against us. Make a push,
Kick over table, as shrewd gamesters do!
We, do you say, encroach upon the rights,
Deny the omnipotence o' the Judge forsooth?
We, who have only been from first to last
Intending that his purpose should prevail,
Nay more, at times, anticipating it
At risk of his rebuke?

But wait awhile!
Cannot we lump this with the sixth and last
Of the aggravations — that the Majesty

O' the Sovereign here received a wound? to-wit,
Læsa Majestas, since our violence
Was out of envy to the course of law,
In odium litis? We cut short thereby
Three pending suits, promoted by ourselves
I' the main, — which worsens crime, *accedit ad Exasperationem criminis!*

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full effect!
How, did not indignation chain my tongue,
Could I repel this last, worst charge of all!
(There is a porcupine to barbacue;
Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,
With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips; but, good Lord,
Suppose the devil instigate the wench
To stew, not roast him? Stew my porcupine?
If she does, I know where his quills shall stick!
Come, I must go myself and see to things:
I cannot stay much longer stewing here.)
Our stomach . . . I mean, our soul is stirred within,
And we want words. We wounded Majesty?
Fall under such a censure, we? — who yearned
So much that Majesty dispel the cloud
And shine on us with healing on her wings,
That we prayed Pope *Majestas*' very self
To anticipate a little the tardy pack,
Bell us forth deep the authoritative bay
Should start the beagles into sudden yelp
Unisonous, — and, Gospel leading Law,
Grant there assemble in our own behoof
A Congregation, a particular Court,
A few picked friends of quality and place,
To hear the several matters in dispute, —
Causes big, little and indifferent,

Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-growth, —
All at once (can one brush off such too soon ?)
And so with laudable despatch decide
Whether we, in the main (to sink detail)
Were one the Pope should hold fast or let go.
" What, take the credit from the Law ? " you ask ?
Indeed, we did ! Law ducks to Gospel here :
Why should Law gain the glory and pronounce
A judgment shall immortalize the Pope ?
Yes : our self-abnegating policy
Was Joab's — we would rouse our David's sloth,
Bid him encamp against a city, sack
A place whereto ourselves had long laid siege,
Lest, taking it at last, it take our name
Nor be styled *Innocentinopolis*.
But no ! The modesty was in alarm,
The temperance refused to interfere,
Returned us our petition with the word
" *Ad judices suos*," " Leave him to his Judge ! "
As who should say " Why trouble my repose ?
Why consult Peter in a simple case,
Peter's wife's sister in her fever-fit
Might solve as readily as the Apostle's self ?
Are my Tribunals posed by aught so plain ?
Hath not my Court a conscience ? It is of age,
Ask it ! "

We do ask, — but, inspire reply
To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I have asked —
Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend
To even the few, the ineffectual words
Which rise from this our low and mundane sphere
Up to thy region out of smoke and noise,
Seeking corroboration from thy nod

Who art all justice — which means mercy too,
In a low noisy smoky world like ours
Where Adam's sin made peccable his seed!
We venerate the father of the flock,
Whose last faint sands of life, the frittered gold,
Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o' the cone
And tapering heap of those collected years:
Never have these been hurried in their flow,
Though justice fain would jog reluctant arm,
In eagerness to take the forfeiture
Of guilty life: much less shall mercy sue
In vain that thou let innocence survive,
Precipitate no minim of the mass
O' the all-so-precious moments of thy life,
By pushing Guido into death and doom!

(Our Cardinal engages to go read
The Pope my speech, and point its beauties out.
They say, the Pope has one half-hour, in twelve,
Of something like a moderate return
Of the intellectuals, — never much to lose!
If I adroitly plant this passage there,
The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I think,
Though he stand, beat till the old ear-drum break!
— Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,
Wilt ever catch the knack, requite the pains
Of poor papa, become proficient too
I' the how and why and when, the time to laugh,
The time to weep, the time, again, to pray,
And all the times prescribed by Holy Writ?
Well, well, we fathers can but care, but cast
Our bread upon the waters!)

In a word,
These secondary charges go to ground,

Since secondary, and superfluous, — motes
Quite from the main point: we did all and some,
Little and much, adjunct and principal,
Causa honoris. Is there such a cause
As the sake of honor? By that sole test try
Our action, nor demand if more or less,
Because of the action's mode, we merit blame
Or maybe deserve praise! The Court decides.
Is the end lawful? It allows the means:
What we may do, we may with safety do,
And what means "safety" we ourselves must judge.
Put case a person wrongs me past dispute:
If my legitimate vengeance be a blow,
Mistrusting my bare arm can deal that blow,
I claim co-operation of a stick;
Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave a sword;
Diffident of ability in fence,
I fee a friend, a swordsman to assist:
Take one — he may be coward, fool or knave:
Why not take fifty? — and if these exceed
I' the due degree of drubbing, whom accuse
But the first author of the aforesaid wrong
Who put poor me to such a world of pains?
Surgery would have just excised a wart;
The patient made such pother, struggled so
That the sharp instrument sliced nose and all.
Taunt us not that our friends performed for pay!
Ourselves had toiled for simple honor's sake:
But country clowns want dirt they comprehend,
The piece of gold! Our reasons, which suffice
Ourselves, be ours alone; our piece of gold
Be, to the rustic, reason he approves!
We must translate our motives like our speech,
Into the lower phrase that suits the sense

O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let
Each level have its language! Heaven speaks first
To the angel, then the angel tames the word
Down to the ear of Tobit: he, in turn,
Diminishes the message to his dog,
And finally that dog finds how the flea
(Which else, importunate, might check his speed)
Shall learn its hunger must have holiday,
By application of his tongue or paw:
So many varied sorts of language here,
Each following each with pace to match the step,
Haud passibus æquis!

Talking of which flea,
Reminds me I must put in special word
For the poor humble following, — the four friends,
Sicarii, our assassins caught and caged.
Ourselves are safe in your approval now:
Yet must we care for our companions, plead
The cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-world faith)
Who lie in tribulation for our sake.
Pauperum Procurator is my style:
I stand forth as the poor man's advocate:
And when we treat of what concerns the poor,
Et cum agatur de pauperibus,
In bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,
In eorum causis, natural piety,
Pietas, ever ought to win the day,
Triumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt,
Because those very paupers constitute,
Thesaurus Christi, all the wealth of Christ.
Nevertheless I shall not hold you long
With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn
Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear.

There beams a case refulgent from our books —
Castrensis, Butringarius, everywhere
I find it burn to dissipate the dark.
'T is this : a husband had a friend, which friend
Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife
In thought and purpose, — I pretend no more.
To justify suspicion or dispel,
He bids his wife make show of giving heed,
Semblance of sympathy — propose, in fine,
A secret meeting in a private place.
The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambuscade,
To-wit, the husband posted with a pack
Of other friends, who fall upon the first
And beat his love and life out both at once.
These friends were brought to question for their help ;
Law ruled " The husband being in the right,
Who helped him in the right can scarce be wrong " —
Opinio, an opinion every way,
Multum tenenda cordi, heart should hold !
When the inferiors follow as befits
The lead o' the principal, they change their name,
And, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called
His mandatories, *mandatorii*,
But helpmates, *sed auxiliatores ;* since
To that degree does honor's sake lend aid,
Adeo honoris causa est efficax,
That not alone, *non solum*, does it pour
Itself out, *se diffundat*, on mere friends
We bring to do our bidding of this sort,
In mandatorios simplices, but sucks
Along with it in wide and generous whirl,
Sed etiam assassinii qualitate
Qualificatos, people qualified
By the quality of assassination's self,

Dare I make use of such neologism,
Ut utar verbo.

Haste we to conclude.
Of the other points that favor, leave some few
For Spreti; such as the delinquents' youth.
One of them falls short, by some months, of age
Fit to be managed by the gallows; two
May plead exemption from our law's award,
Being foreigners, subjects of the Granduke —
I spare that bone to Spreti, and reserve
Myself the juicier breast of argument —
Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o' the Fisc,
Who furnished me the tid-bit: he must needs
Play off his privilege and rack the clowns, —
And they, at instance of the rack, confess
All four unanimously made resolve, —
The night o' the murder, in brief minute snatched
Behind the back of Guido as he fled, —
That, since he had not kept his promise, paid
The money for the murder on the spot,
So, reaching home again, might please ignore
The pact or pay them in improper coin, —
They one and all resolved, these hopeful friends,
'T were best inaugurate the morrow's light,
Nature recruited with her due repose,
By killing Guido as he lay asleep
Pillowed on wallet which contained their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this fact:
What fact could hope to make more manifest
Their rectitude, Guido's integrity?
For who fails recognize the touching truth
That these poor rustics bore no envy, hate,

Malice nor yet uncharitableness
Against the people they had put to death?
In them, did such an act reward itself?
All done was to deserve the simple pay,
Obtain the bread clowns earn by sweat of brow,
And missing which, they missed of everything —
Hence claimed pay, even at expense of life
To their own lord, so little warped (admire!)
By prepossession, such the absolute
Instinct of equity in rustic souls!
Whereas our Count, the cultivated mind,
He, wholly rapt in his serene regard
Of honor, he contemplating the sun
Who hardly marks if taper blink below, —
He, dreaming of no argument for death
Except a vengeance worthy noble hearts, —
Dared not so desecrate the deed, forsooth,
Vulgarize vengeance, as defray its cost
By money dug from out the dirty earth,
Irritant mere, in Ovid's phrase, to ill.
What though he lured base hinds by lucre's hope, —
The only motive they could masticate,
Milk for babes, not strong meat which men require?
The deed done, those coarse hands were soiled enough,
He spared them the pollution of the pay.
So much for the allegement, thine, my Fisc,
Quo nil absurdius, than which naught more mad,
Excogitari potest, may be squeezed
From out the cogitative brain of thee!
And now, thou excellent the Governor!
(Push to the peroration) *cæterum*
Enixe supplico, I strive in prayer,
Ut dominis meis, that unto the Court,
Benigna fronte, with a gracious brow,

Et oculis serenis, and mild eyes,
Perpendere placeat, it may please them weigh,
Quod dominus Guido, that our noble Count,
Occidit, did the killing in dispute,
Ut ejus honor tumulatus, that
The honor of him buried fathom-deep
In infamy, *in infamia*, might arise,
Resurgeret, as ghost breaks sepulchre!
Occidit, for he killed, *uxorem*, wife,
Quia illi fuit, since she was to him,
Opprobrio, a disgrace and nothing more!
Et genitores, killed her parents too,
Qui, who, *postposita verecundia*,
Having thrown off all sort of decency,
Filiam repudiarunt, had renounced
Their daughter, *atque declarare non*
Erubuerunt, nor felt blush tinge cheek,
Declaring, *meretricis genitam*
Esse, she was the offspring of a drab,
Ut ipse dehonestaretur, just
That so himself might lose his social rank!
Cujus mentem, and which daughter's heart and soul,
They, *perverterunt*, turned from the right course,
Et ad illicitos amores non
Dumtaxat pellexerunt, and to love
Not simply did alluringly incite,
Sed vi obedientiæ, but by force
O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,
Coegerunt, forced and drove her to the deed:
Occidit, I repeat he killed the clan,
Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore,
Lest peradventure longer life might trail,
Viveret, link by link his turpitude,
Invisus consanguineis, hateful so

To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*
Notatus, shunned by men of quality,
Relictus ab amicis, left i' the lurch
By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned
A common hack-block to try edge of jokes.
Occidit, and he killed them here in Rome,
In Urbe, the Eternal City, Sirs,
Nempe quæ alias spectata est,
The appropriate theatre which witnessed once,
Matronam nobilem, Lucretia's self,
Abluere pudicitiæ maculas,
Wash off the spots of her pudicity,
Sanguine proprio, with her own pure blood;
Quæ vidit, and which city also saw,
Patrem, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite,
Impunem, with no sort of punishment,
Nor, *et non illaudatum*, lacking praise,
Sed polluentem parricidio,
Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filiæ*,
Of chaste Virginia, to avoid a rape,
Ne raperetur ad stupra; so to heart,
Tanti illi cordi fuit, did he take,
Suspicio, the mere fancy men might have,
Honoris amittendi, of fame's loss,
Ut potius voluerit filia
Orbari, he preferred to lose his child,
Quam illa incederet, rather than she walk
The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,
Licet non sponte, though against her will.
Occidit — killed them, I reiterate —
In propria domo, in their own abode,
Ut adultera et parentes, that each wretch,
Conscii agnoscerent, might both see and say,
Nullum locum, there 's no place, *nullumque esse*

Asylum, nor yet refuge of escape,
Impenetrabilem, shall serve as bar,
Honori læso, to the wounded one
In honor; *neve ibi opprobria*
Continuarentur, killed them on the spot,
Moreover, dreading lest within those walls
The opprobrium peradventure be prolonged,
Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium,
And that the domicile which witnessed crime,
Esset et pœnæ, might watch punishment:
Occidit, killed, I round you in the ears,
Quia alio modo, since by other mode,
Non poterat ejus existimatio,
There was no possibility his fame,
Læsa, gashed griesly, *tam enormiter*,
Ducere cicatrices, might be healed:
Occidit ut exemplum præberet
Uxoribus, killed her, so to lesson wives
Jura conjugii, that the marriage-oath,
Esse servanda, must be kept henceforth:
Occidit denique, killed her, in a word,
Ut pro posse honestus viveret,
That he, please God, might creditably live,
Sin minus, but if fate willed otherwise,
Proprii honoris, of his outraged fame,
Offensi, by Mannaia, if you please,
Commiseranda victima caderet,
The pitiable victim he should fall!

Done! I' the rough, i' the rough! But done! And, lo,
Landed and stranded lies my very speech,
My miracle, my monster of defence —
Leviathan into the nose whereof
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw with thorn,

And given him to my maidens for a play!
I' the rough: to-morrow I review my piece,
Tame here and there undue floridity.
It's hard: you have to plead before these priests
And poke at them with Scripture, or you pass
For heathen and, what's worse, for ignorant
O' the quality o' the Court and what it likes
By way of illustration of the law.
To-morrow stick in this, and throw out that,
And, having first ecclesiasticized,
Regularize the whole, next emphasize,
Then latinize, and lastly Cicero-ize,
Giving my Fisc his finish. There's my speech!
And where's my fry, and family and friends?
Where's that huge Hyacinth I mean to hug
Till he cries out, "*Jam satis!* Let me breathe!"
Now, what an evening have I earned to-day!
Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are false!
Oh the old mother, oh the fattish wife!
Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper toque,
And wrap himself around with mamma's veil
Done up to imitate papa's black robe,
(I 'm in the secret of the comedy, —
Part of the program leaked out long ago!)
And call himself the Advocate o' the Poor,
Mimic Don father that defends the Count:
And for reward shall have a small full glass
Of manly red rosolio to himself,
— Always provided that he conjugate
Bibo, I drink, correctly — nor be found
Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!
How the ambitious do so harden heart
As lightly hold by these home-sanctitudes,
To me is matter of bewilderment —

Bewilderment! Because ambition's range
Is nowise tethered by domestic tie.
Am I refused an outlet from my home
To the world's stage? — whereon a man should play
The man in public, vigilant for law,
Zealous for truth, a credit to his kind,
Nay, — since, employing talent so, I yield
The Lord His own again with usury, —
A satisfaction, yea, to God himself!
Well, I have modelled me by Agur's wish,
"Remove far from me vanity and lies,
Feed me with food convenient for me!" What
I' the world should a wise man require beyond?
Can I but coax the good fat little wife
To tell her fool of a father the mad prank
His scapegrace nephew played this time last year
At Carnival! He could not choose, I think,
But modify that inconsiderate gift
O' the cup and cover (somewhere in the will
Under the pillow, someone seems to guess)
— Correct that clause in favor of a boy
The trifle ought to grace, with name engraved,
Would look so well, produced in future years
To pledge a memory, when poor papa
Latin and law are long since laid at rest —
Hyacintho dono dedit avus! Why,
The wife should get a necklace for her pains,
The very pearls that made Violante proud,
And Pietro pawned for half their value once, —
Redeemable by somebody, *ne sit*
Marita quæ rotundioribus
Onusta mammis . . . baccis ambulet:
Her bosom shall display the big round balls,

No braver proudly borne by wedded wife !
With which Horatian promise I conclude.

Into the pigeon-hole with thee, my speech!
Off and away, first work then play, play, play !
Bottini, burn thy books, thou blazing ass !
Sing " Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we must live ! "

IX.

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

[Pompilia's advocate, Dr. Bottinius, is presented in Book IX. in the process of writing down his speech. He builds, even out of the questionable and already refuted evidence brought against his client, a justification of her course as the only one a defenceless woman could take to avoid greater evil. He makes as elaborate claims for her purity as are consistent with the politic attitude of a man of the world toward the weakness of womanhood, adorning his speech with learned literary allusions ingeniously devised not only to throw an effective light upon his plea, but also to display becomingly his cultured style.]

Had I God's leave, how I would alter things!
If I might read instead of print my speech, —
Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower
Refuses obstinate to blow in print,
As wildings planted in a prim parterre, —
This scurvy room were turned an immense hall;
Opposite, fifty judges in a row;
This side and that of me, for audience — Rome:
And, where yon window is, the Pope should hide —
Watch, curtained, but peep visibly enough.
A buzz of expectation! Through the crowd,

Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,
Up comes an usher, louts him low, "The Court
Requires the allocution of the Fisc!"
I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause
O'er the hushed multitude: I count — One, two ——

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law, —
When it may hap some painter, much in vogue
Throughout our city nutritive of arts,
Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,
And manufacture, as he knows and can,
A work may decorate a palace-wall,
Afford my lords their Holy Family, —
Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court
How such a painter sets himself to paint?
Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe
A-journeying to Egypt, prove the piece:
Why, first he sedulously practiseth,
This painter, — girding loin and lighting lamp, —
On what may nourish eye, make facile hand;
Getteth him studies (styled by draughtsmen so)
From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk
Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves, —
This Luca or this Carlo or the like.
To him the bones their inmost secret yield,
Each notch and nodule signify their use:
On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,
And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man
"Familiarize thee with our play that lifts
Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm and foot!"
— Ensuring due correctness in the nude.
Which done, is all done? Not a whit, ye know!
He, — to art's surface rising from her depth, —
If some flax-polled soft-bearded sire be found,

May simulate a Joseph, (happy chance!) —
Limneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,
Loseth no involution, cheek or chap,
Till lo, in black and white, the senior lives!
Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse
That poseth? (be the phrase accorded me!)
Each feminine delight of florid lip,
Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed down with love,
Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous, —
Glad on the paper in a trice they go
To help his notion of the Mother-maid:
Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped!
Yea and her babe — that flexure of soft limbs,
That budding face imbued with dewy sleep,
Contribute each an excellence to Christ.
Nay, since he humbly lent companionship,
Even the poor ass, unpanniered and elate
Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too;
While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd, —
Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste, —
No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn
Ministers to perfection of the piece:
Till now, such piece before him, part by part, —
Such prelude ended, — pause our painter may,
Submit his fifty studies one by one,
And in some sort boast "I have served my lords."

But what? And hath he painted once this while?
Or when ye cry "Produce the thing required,
Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,
Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils!" —
What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets,
Fumbling for first this, then the other fact
Consigned to paper, — "studies," bear the term! —

And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,
And fasten here a head and there a tail,
(The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-tail
Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrily out —
By bits of reproduction of the life —
The picture, the expected Family?
I trow not! do I miss with my conceit
The mark, my lords? — not so my lords were served!
Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,
And preferably buries him and broods
(Quite away from aught vulgar and extern)
On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,
His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop,
E pluribus unum: and the wiser he!
For in that brain, — their fancy sees at work,
Could my lords peep indulged, — results alone,
Not processes which nourish such results,
Would they discover and appreciate, — life
Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,
No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme
Secreted from each snapped-up crudity, —
Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole
Truer to the subject, — the main central truth
And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy, —
Not those mere fragmentary studied facts
Which answer to the outward frame and flesh —
Not this nose, not that eyebrow, the other fact
Of man's staff, woman's stole or infant's clout,
But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of flesh,
Truth rare and real, not transcripts, fact and false.
The studies — for his pupils and himself!
The picture be for our eximious Rome
And — who knows? — satisfy its Governor,
Whose new wing to the villa he hath bought

(God give him joy of it) by Capena, soon
('T is bruited) shall be glowing with the brush
Of who hath long surpassed the Florentine,
The Urbinate and . . . what if I dared add,
Even his master, yea the Cortonese, —
I mean the accomplished Ciro Ferri, Sirs!
(— Did not he die? I 'll see before I print.)

End we exordium, Phœbus plucks my ear!
Thus then, just so and no whit otherwise,
Have I, — engaged as I were Ciro's self,
To paint a parallel, a Family,
The patriarch Pietro with his wise old wife
To boot (as if one introduced Saint Anne
By bold conjecture to complete the group)
And juvenile Pompilia with her babe,
Who, seeking safety in the wilderness,
Were all surprised by Herod, while outstretched
In sleep beneath a palm-tree by a spring,
And killed — the very circumstance I paint,
Moving the pity and terror of my lords —
Exactly so have I, a month at least,
Your Fiscal, made me cognizant of facts,
Searched out, pried into, pressed the meaning forth
Of every piece of evidence in point,
How bloody Herod slew these innocents, —
Until the glad result is gained, the group
Demonstrably presented in detail,
Their slumber and his onslaught, — like as life.
Yea and, availing me of help allowed
By law, discreet provision lest my lords
Be too much troubled by effrontery, —
The rack, law plies suspected crime withal —
(Law that hath listened while the lyrist sang

"*Lene tormentum ingenio admoves*,"
Gently thou joggest, by a twinge the wit,
"*Plerumque duro*," else were slow to blab!)
Through this concession my full cup runs o'er:
The guilty owns his guilt without reserve.
Therefore by part and part I clutch my case
Which, in entirety now, — momentous task, —
My lords demand, so render them I must,
Since, one poor pleading more and I have done.
But shall I ply my papers, play my proofs,
Parade my studies, fifty in a row,
As though the Court were yet in pupilage,
Claimed not the artist's ultimate appeal?
Much rather let me soar the height prescribed
And, bowing low, proffer my picture's self!
No more of proof, disproof, — such virtue was,
Such vice was never in Pompilia, now!
Far better say "Behold Pompilia!" — (for
I leave the family as unmanageable,
And stick to just one portrait, but life-size.)
Hath calumny imputed to the fair
A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on chin,
Much more, blind hidden horrors best unnamed?
Shall I descend to prove you, point by point,
Never was knock-knee known nor splay-foot found
In Phryne? (I must let the portrait go,
Content me with the model, I believe) —
— I prove this? An indignant sweep of hand,
Dash at and doing away with drapery,
And, — use your eyes, Athenians, smooth she smiles!
Or, — since my client can no longer smile,
And more appropriate instances abound, —
What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the slave
Was caught by him, preferred to Collatine?

Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes virginal,
Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia!
Thus at least
I, by the guidance of antiquity,
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,
Sure that the innocence thus shown is safe;
Sure, too, that while I plead, the echoes cry,
(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sonorous Fame!)
"Monstrosity the Phrynean shape shall mar,
Lucretia's soul comport with Tarquin's lie,
When thistles grow on vines or thorns yield figs,
Or oblique sentence leave this judgment-seat!"

A great theme: may my strength be adequate!
For — paint Pompilia, dares my feebleness?
How did I unaware engage so much
— Find myself undertaking to produce
A faultless nature in a flawless form?
What's here? Oh, turn aside nor dare the blaze
Of such a crown, such constellation, say,
As jewels here thy front, Humanity!
First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl;
Then childhood — stone which, dew-drop at the first,
(An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of gaze,
Blue from the sky and turns to sapphire so:
Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last and best,
Womanliness and wifehood opaline,
Its milk-white pallor, — chastity, — suffused
With here and there a tint and hint of flame, —
Desire, — the lapidary loves to find.
Such jewels bind conspicuously thy brow,
Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman, wife —
Crown the ideal in our earth at last!

What should a faculty like mine do here?
Close eyes, or else, the rashlier hurry hand!

Which is to say, — lose no time but begin!
Sermocinando ne declamem, Sirs,
Ultra clepsydram, as our preachers smile,
Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Whereupon,
As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic plunge —
Begin at once with marriage, up till when
Little or nothing would arrest your love,
In the easeful life o' the lady; lamb and lamb,
How do they differ? Know one, you know all
Manners of maidenhood: mere maiden she.
And since all lambs are like in more than fleece,
Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too frisks —
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker sex!
To whom, the Teian teaches us, for gift,
Not strength, — man's dower, — but beauty, nature gave,
"Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of shields!"
And what is beauty's sure concomitant,
Nay, intimate essential character,
But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,
The whole redoubted armory of love?
Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevellings
O' the hair of youth that dances April in,
And easily-imagined Hebe-slips
O'er sward which May makes over-smooth for foot —
These shall we pry into? — or wiselier wink,
Though numerous and dear they may have been?

For lo, advancing Hymen and his pomp!
Discedunt nunc amores, loves, farewell!
Maneat amor, let love, the sole, remain!
Farewell to dewiness and prime of life!

Remains the rough determined day: dance done,
To work, with plough and harrow! What comes next?
'T is Guido henceforth guides Pompilia's step,
Cries "No more friskings o'er the foodful glebe,
Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordingly, — first crack
O' the thong, — we hear that his young wife was barred,
Cohibita fuit, from the old free life,
Vitam liberiorem ducere.
Demur we? Nowise: heifer brave the hind? 250
We seek not there should lapse the natural law,
The proper piety to lord and king
And husband: let the heifer bear the yoke!
Only, I crave he cast not patience off,
This hind; for deem you she endures the whip,
Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive, kicks?
What if the adversary's charge be just,
And all untowardly she pursue her way
With groan and grunt, though hind strike ne'er so hard?
If petulant remonstrance made appeal, 260
Unseasonable, o'erprotracted, — if
Importunate challenge taxed the public ear
When silence more decorously had served
For protestation, — if Pompilian plaint
Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian ire, —
Why, such mishaps, ungainly though they be,
Ever companion change, are incident
To altered modes and novelty of life:
The philosophic mind expects no less,
Smilingly knows and names the crisis, sits 270
Waiting till old things go and new arrive.
Therefore, I hold a husband but inept
Who turns impatient at such transit-time,
As if this running from the rod would last!
Since, even while I speak, the end is reached:

Success awaits the soon-disheartened man.
The parents turn their backs and leave the house,
The wife may wail but none shall intervene:
He hath attained his object, groom and bride
Partake the nuptial bower no soul can see,
Old things are passed and all again is new,
Over and gone the obstacles to peace,
Novorum — tenderly the Mantuan turns
The expression, some such purpose in his eye —
Nascitur ordo! Every storm is laid,
And forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,
Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late:
(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant and wife,
Flowers, — after a suppression to good end,
Still, when they do spring forth, — sprout here, spread there,
Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground?
He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered, — still
'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.
Just so, respecting persons not too much,
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of feminity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck: what if the charge be true?
The fault were graver had she looked with choice,
Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,
Who, in the whole town, go without the prize!
To nobody she destined donative,
But, first come was first served, the accuser saith.
Put case her sort of . . . in this kind . . . escapes
Were many and oft and indiscriminate —

Impute ye as the action were prepense,
The gift particular, arguing malice so?
Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag
"I was preferred to Guido" — when 't is clear
The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent breast
Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as well?
One chalice entertained the company;
And if its peevish lord object the more,
Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,
Haste we to advertise him — charm of cheek,
Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,
All womanly components in a spouse,
These are no household-bread each stranger's bite
Leaves by so much diminished for the mouth
O' the master of the house at supper-time:
But rather like a lump of spice they lie,
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neighborhood
Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.

Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied!
Concede we there was reason in his wrong,
Grant we his grievance and content the man!
For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself;
Ere three revolving years have crowned their course,
Off and away she puts this same reproach
Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift
O' the sweets of wifehood stored to other ends:
No longer shall he blame "She none excludes,"
But substitute "She laudably sees all,
Searches the best out and selects the same."
For who is here, long sought and latest found,
Waiting his turn unmoved amid the whirl,
"*Constans in levitate*," — Ha, my lords?
Calm in his levity, — indulge the quip! —

Since 't is a levite bears the bell away,
Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's choice.
'T is no ignoble object, husband! Doubt'st?
When here comes tripping Flaccus with his phrase
"Trust me, no miscreant singled from the mob,
Crede non illum tibi de scelesta
Plebe delectum," but a man of mark,
A priest, dost hear? Why then, submit thyself!
Priest, ay and very phœnix of such fowl,
Well-born, of culture, young and vigorous,
Comely too, since precise the precept points —
On the selected levite be there found
Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the mind
Come all uncandid through the thwarting flesh!
Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,
Pleasant to look on, pleasant every way?
Since well he smote the harp and sweetly sang,
And danced till Abigail came out to see,
And seeing smiled and smiling ministered
The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,
With ready meal refreshed the gifted youth,
Till Nabal, who was absent shearing sheep,
Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly done —
They might have been beforehand with him else)
And died — would Guido have behaved as well!
But ah, the faith of early days is gone,
Heu prisca fides! Nothing died in him
Save courtesy, good sense and proper trust,
Which, when they ebb from souls they should o'erflow,
Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness.
(The Pope, we know, is Neapolitan
And relishes a sea-side simile.)
Deserted by each charitable wave,
Guido, left high and dry, shows jealous now!

Jealous avouched, paraded: tax the fool
With any peccadillo, he responds
"Truly I beat my wife through jealousy,
Imprisoned her and punished otherwise,
Being jealous: now would threaten, sword in hand,
Now manage to mix poison in her sight,
And so forth: jealously I dealt, in fine."
Concede thus much, and what remains to prove?
Have I to teach my masters what effect
Hath jealousy, and how, befooling men,
It makes false true, abuses eye and ear,
Turns mere mist adamantine, loads with sound
Silence, and into void and vacancy
Crowds a whole phalanx of conspiring foes?
Therefore who owns "I watched with jealousy
My wife," adds "for no reason in the world!"
What need that, thus proved madman, he remark
"The thing I thought a serpent proved an eel"?—
Perchance the right Comacchian, six foot length,
And not an inch too long for that rare pie
(Master Arcangeli has heard of such)
Whose succulence makes fasting bearable;
Meant to regale some moody splenetic
Who, pleasing to mistake the donor's gift,
Spying I know not what Lernæan snake
I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamps forsooth
The dainty in the dust.

Enough! Prepare,
Such lunes announced, for downright lunacy!
Insanit homo, threat succeeds to threat,
And blow redoubles blow,—his wife, the block.
But, if a block, shall not she jar the hand
That buffets her? The injurious idle stone

Rebounds and hits the head of him who flung.
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now, rageful cause,
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.
Rebellion, say I? — rather, self-defence,
Laudable wish to live and see good days,
Pricks our Pompilia now to fly the fool
By any means, at any price, — nay, more,
Nay, most of all, i' the very interest
O' the fool that, baffled of his blind desire
At any price, were truliest victor so.
Shall he effect his crime and lose his soul?
No, dictates duty to a loving wife!
Far better that the unconsummate blow,
Adroitly balked by her, should back again,
Correctively admonish his own pate!

Crime then, — the Court is with me? — she must crush:
How crush it? By all efficacious means;
And these, — why, what in woman should they be?
"With horns the bull, with teeth the lion fights;
To woman," quoth the lyrist quoted late,
"Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty, Nature gave."
Pretty i' the Pagan! Who dares blame the use
Of armory thus allowed for natural, —
Exclaim against a seeming-dubious play
O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and shield
Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance
By poor Pompilia? Grant she somewhat plied
Arts that allure, the magic nod and wink,
The witchery of gesture, spell of word,
Whereby the likelier to enlist this friend,
Yea stranger, as a champion on her side?
Such man, being but mere man, ('t was all she knew),
Must be made sure by beauty's silken bond,

The weakness that subdues the strong, and bows
Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the tale
O' the husband, which is false, were proved and true
To the letter — or the letters, I should say,
Abominations he professed to find
And fix upon Pompilia and the priest, —
Allow them hers — for though she could not write,
In early days of Eve-like innocence
That plucked no apple from the knowledge-tree,
Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks and eats
And knows — especially how to read and write:
And so Pompilia, — as the move o' the maw,
Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid "Good day!"
A crow salute the concave, and a pie
Endeavor at proficiency in speech, —
So she, through hunger after fellowship,
May well have learned, though late, to play the scribe:
As indeed, there 's one letter on the list
Explicitly declares did happen here.
"You thought my letters could be none of mine,"
She tells her parents — "mine, who wanted skill;
But now I have the skill, and write, you see!"
She needed write love-letters, so she learned,
"*Negatas artifex sequi voces*" — though
This letter nowise 'scapes the common lot,
But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,
Found by the husband's self who forged them all.
Yet, for the sacredness of argument,
For this once an exemption shall it plead —
Anything, anything to let the wheels
Of argument run glibly to their goal!
Concede she wrote (which were preposterous)
This and the other epistle, — what of it?

Where does the figment touch her candid fame?
Being in peril of her life — "my life,
Not an hour's purchase," as the letter runs, —
And having but one stay in this extreme,
Out of the wide world but a single friend —
What could she other than resort to him,
And how with any hope resort but thus?
Shall modesty dare bid a stranger brave
Danger, disgrace, nay death in her behalf—
Think to entice the sternness of the steel
Yet spare love's loadstone moving manly mind?
— Most of all, when such mind is hampered so
By growth of circumstance athwart the life
O' the natural man, that decency forbids
He stoop and take the common privilege,
Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar do.
A man is wedded to philosophy,
Married to statesmanship; a man is old;
A man is fettered by the foolishness
He took for wisdom and talked ten years since;
A man is, like our friend the Canon here,
A priest, and wicked if he break his vow:
Shall he dare love, who may be Pope one day?
Despite the coil of such encumbrance here,
Suppose this man could love, unhappily,
And would love, dared he only let love show!
In case the woman of his love speaks first,
From what embarrassment she sets him free!
"'T is I who break reserve, begin appeal,
Confess that, whether you love me or no,
I love you!" What an ease to dignity,
What help of pride from the hard high-backed chair
Down to the carpet where the kittens bask,
All under the pretence of gratitude!

From all which, I deduce — the lady here
Was bound to proffer nothing short of love
To the priest whose service was to save her. What?
Shall she propose him lucre, dust o' the mine,
Rubbish o' the rock, some diamond, muckworms prize,
Some pearl secreted by a sickly fish?
Scarcely! She caters for a generous taste.
'T is shall love beckon, beauty bid to breast,
Till all the Samson sink into the snare!
Because, permit the end — permit therewith
Means to the end!
How say you, good my lords?
I hope you heard my adversary ring
The changes on this precept: now, let me
Reverse the peal! *Quia dato licito fine,*
Ad illum assequendum ordinata
Non sunt damnanda media, — licit end
Enough was found in mere escape from death,
To legalize our means illicit else
Of feigned love, false allurement, fancied fact.
Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,
(See that *Idyllium Moschi*) seeking help,
In the anxiety of motherhood,
Allowably promised "Who shall bring report
Where he is wandered to, my winged babe,
I give him for reward a nectared kiss;
But who brings safely back the truant's self,
His be a super-sweet makes kiss seem cold!"
Are not these things writ for example-sake?

To such permitted motive, then, refer
All those professions, else were hard explain,
Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest of love!
He is Myrtillus, Amaryllis she,

She burns, he freezes, — all a mere device
To catch and keep the man, may save her life,
Whom otherwise nor catches she nor keeps !
Worst, once, turns best now: in all faith, she feigns:
Feigning, — the liker innocence to guilt,
The truer to the life in what she feigns !
How if Ulysses, — when, for public good
He sunk particular qualms and played the spy,
Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's garb —
How if he first had boggled at this clout,
Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish ? Grime is grace
To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.

Hence, beyond promises, we praise each proof
That promise was not simply made to break,
Mere moonshine-structure meant to fade at dawn:
We praise, as consequent and requisite,
What, enemies allege, were more than words,
Deeds — meetings at the window, twilight-trysts,
Nocturnal entertainments in the dim
Old labyrinthine palace; lies, we know —
Inventions we, long since, turned inside out.
Must such external semblance of intrigue
Demonstrate that intrigue there lurks perdue ?
Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut ?
He were a Molinist who dared maintain
That midnight meetings in a screened alcove
Must argue folly in a matron — since
So would he bring a slur on Judith's self,
Commended beyond women, that she lured
The lustful to destruction through his lust.
Pompilia took not Judith's liberty,
No faulchion find you in her hand to smite,
No damsel to convey in dish the head

Of Holophernes, — style the Canon so —
Or is it the Count? If I entangle me
With my similitudes, — if wax wings melt,
And earthward down I drop, not mine the fault:
Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,
Whereof the beamy smile affects my flight!
What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive
I' the warmth that proves the bane of Icarus?

'Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary
Pompilia leave her husband, seek the house
O' the parents: and because 'twixt home and home
Lies a long road with many a danger rife,
Lions by the way and serpents in the path,
To rob and ravish, — much behoves she keep
Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame,
For her own sake much, but for his sake more,
The ingrate husband's. Evidence shall be,
Plain witness to the world how white she walks
I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome she reach.
And who so proper witness as a priest?
Gainsay ye? Let me hear who dares gainsay!
I hope we still can punish heretics!
"Give me the man," I say with him of Gath,
"That we may fight together!" None, I think:
The priest is granted me.

Then, if a priest,
One juvenile and potent: else, mayhap,
That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him.
And should fair face accompany strong hand,
The more complete equipment: nothing mars
Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw
I' the worker: as 'tis said Saint Paul himself
Deplored the check o' the puny presence, still

Cheating his fulmination of its flash,
Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.
Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she takes, —
Both juvenile and potent, handsome too, —
In all obedience: "good," you grant again.
Do you? I would you were the husband, lords!
How prompt and facile might departure be!
How boldly would Pompilia and the priest
March out of door, spread flag at beat of drum,
But that inapprehensive Guido grants
Neither premiss nor yet conclusion here,
And, purblind, dreads a bear in every bush!
For his own quietude and comfort, then,
Means must be found for flight in masquerade
At hour when all things sleep. — "Save jealousy!"
Right, Judges! Therefore shall the lady's wit
Supply the boon thwart nature balks him of,
And do him service with the potent drug
(Helen's nepenthe, as my lords opine)
Which respites blessedly each fretted nerve
O' the much-enduring man: accordingly,
There lies he, duly dosed and sound asleep,
Relieved of woes or real or raved about.
While soft she leaves his side, he shall not wake;
Nor stop who steals away to join her friend,
Nor do him mischief should he catch that friend
Intent on more than friendly office, — nay,
Nor get himself raw head and bones laid bare
In payment of his apparition!

Thus
Would I defend the step, — were the thing true
Which is a fable, — see my former speech, —
That Guido slept (who never slept a wink)

Through treachery, an opiate from his wife,
Who not so much as knew what opiates mean.

Now she may start: or hist, — a stoppage still!
A journey is an enterprise of cost!
As in campaigns, we fight but others pay,
Suis expensis, nemo militat.
'T is Guido's self we guard from accident,
Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed
Nowise in misadventures by the way,
Hard riding and rough quarters, the rude fare,
The unready host. What magic mitigates
Each plague of travel to the unpractised wife?
Money, sweet Sirs! And were the fiction fact
She helped herself thereto with liberal hand
From out her husband's store, — what fitter use
Was ever husband's money destined to?
With bag and baggage thus did Dido once
Decamp, — for more authority, a queen!

So is she fairly on her route at last,
Prepared for either fortune: nay and if
The priest, now all a-glow with enterprise,
Cool somewhat presently when fades the flush
O' the first adventure, clouded o'er belike
By doubts, misgivings how the day may die,
Though born with such auroral brilliance, — if
The brow seem over-pensive and the lip
'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsome late, —
Vanquished by tedium or a prolonged jaunt
In a close carriage o'er a jolting road,
With only one young female substitute
For seventeen other Canons of ripe age
Were wont to keep him company in church, —
Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate

The silent cloud that, gathering, bodes her bale? —
Prop the irresoluteness may portend
Suspension of the project, check the flight,
Bring ruin on them both? Use every means,
Since means to the end are lawful! What i' the way
Of wile should have allowance like a kiss
Sagely and sisterly administered,
Sororia saltem oscula? We find
Such was the remedy her wit applied
To each incipient scruple of the priest,
If we believe, — as, while my wit is mine
I cannot, — what the driver testifies,
Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool
Of Guido and his friend the Governor, —
Avowal I proved wrung from out the wretch,
After long rotting in imprisonment,
As price of liberty and favor: long
They tempted, he at last succumbed, and lo
Counted them out full tale each kiss and more,
"The journey being one long embrace," quoth he.
Still, though we should believe the driver's lie,
Nor even admit as probable excuse,
Right reading of the riddle, — as I urged
In my first argument, with fruit perhaps —
That what the owl-like eyes (at back of head!)
O' the driver, drowsed by driving night and day,
Supposed a vulgar interchange of lips,
This was but innocent jog of head 'gainst head,
Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch pear
From branch and branch contiguous in the wind,
When Autumn blusters and the orchard rocks: —
That rapid run and the rough road were cause
O' the casual ambiguity, no harm
I' the world to eyes awake and penetrative.

Say, — not to grasp a truth I can release
And safely fight without, yet conquer still, —
Say, she kissed him, say, he kissed her again!
Such osculation was a potent means,
A very efficacious help, no doubt:
Such with a third part of her nectar did
Venus imbue: why should Pompilia fling
The poet's declaration in his teeth? —
Pause to employ what — since it had success,
And kept the priest her servant to the end —
We must presume of energy enough,
No whit superfluous, so permissible?

The goal is gained: day, night and yet a day
Have run their round: a long and devious road
Is traversed, — many manners, various men
Passed in review, what cities did they see,
What hamlets mark, what profitable food
For after-meditation cull and store!
Till Rome, that Rome whereof — this voice
Would it might make our Molinists observe,
That she is built upon a rock nor shall
Their powers prevail against her! — Rome, I say,
Is all but reached; one stage more and they stop
Saved: pluck up heart, ye pair, and forward, then!

Ah, Nature — baffled she recurs, alas!
Nature imperiously exacts her due,
Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak:
Pompilia needs must acquiesce and swoon,
Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-while.
The innocent sleep soundly: sound she sleeps,
So let her slumber, then, unguarded save
By her own chastity, a triple mail,
And his good hand whose stalwart arms have borne

The sweet and senseless burthen like a babe
From coach to couch, — the serviceable strength !
Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly
On the pale beauty prisoned in embrace,
Stooped over, stole a balmy breath perhaps
For more assurance sleep was not decease —
" *Ut vidi*," " how I saw ! " succeeded by
" *Ut perii*," " how I sudden lost my brains ! "
— What harm ensued to her unconscious quite ?
For, curiosity — how natural !
Importunateness — what a privilege
In the ardent sex ! And why curb ardor here ?
How can the priest but pity whom he saved ?
And pity is so near to love, and love
So neighborly to all unreasonableness !
As to love's object, whether love were sage
Or foolish, could Pompilia know or care,
Being still sound asleep, as I premised ?
Thus the philosopher absorbed by thought,
Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book
The while besiegers sacked his Syracuse,
Was ignorant of the imminence o' the point
O' the sword till it surprised him : let it stab,
And never knew himself was dead at all.
So sleep thou on, secure whate'er betide !
For thou, too, hast thy problem hard to solve —
How so much beauty is compatible
With so much innocence !

Fit place, methinks,
While in this task she rosily is lost,
To treat of and repel objection here
Which, — frivolous, I grant, — my mind misgives,
May somehow still have flitted, gadfly-like,

And teased the Court at times — as if, all said
And done, there seemed, the Court might nearly say,
In a certain acceptation, somewhat more
Of what may pass for insincerity,
Falsehood, throughout the course Pompilia took,
Than befits Christian. Pagans held, we know,
Man always ought to aim at good and truth,
Not always put one thing in the same words:
Non idem semper dicere sed spectare
Debemus. But the Pagan yoke was light;
"Lie not at all," the exacter precept bids:
Each least lie breaks the law, — is sin, we hold.
I humble me, but venture to submit —
What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure:
And sin, which hinders sin of deeper dye,
Softens itself away by contrast so.
Conceive me! Little sin, by none at all,
Were properly condemned for great: but great,
By greater, dwindles into small again.
Now, what is greatest sin of womanhood?
That which unwomans it, abolishes
The nature of the woman, — impudence.
Who contradicts me here? Concede me, then,
Whatever friendly fault may interpose
To save the sex from self-abolishment
Is three-parts on the way to virtue's rank!
And, what is taxed here as duplicity,
Feint, wile and trick, — admitted for the nonce, —
What worse do one and all than interpose,
Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,
Statuesquely, in the Medicean mode,
Before some shame which modesty would veil?
Who blames the gesture prettily perverse?
Thus, — lest ye miss a point illustrative, —

Admit the husband's calumny — allow
That the wife, having penned the epistle fraught
With horrors, charge on charge of crime she heaped
O' the head of Pietro and Violante — (still
Presumed her parents) — having despatched the same
To their arch-enemy Paolo, through free choice
And no sort of compulsion in the world —
Put case she next discards simplicity
For craft, denies the voluntary act,
Declares herself a passive instrument
I' the husband's hands; that, duped by knavery,
She traced the characters she could not write,
And took on trust the unread sense which, read,
And recognized were to be spurned at once:
Allow this calumny, I reiterate!
Who is so dull as wonder at the pose
Of our Pompilia in the circumstance?
Who sees not that the too-ingenuous soul,
Repugnant even at a duty done
Which brought beneath too scrutinizing glare
The misdemeanors, — buried in the dark, —
Of the authors of her being, as believed, —
Stung to the quick at her impulsive deed,
And willing to repair what harm it worked,
She — wise in this beyond what Nero proved,
Who when folk urged the candid juvenile
To sign the warrant, doom the guilty dead,
"Would I had never learned to write," quoth he!
— Pompilia rose above the Roman, cried
"To read or write I never learned at all!"
O splendidly mendacious!

But time fleets:
Let us not linger: hurry to the end,

Since flight does end, and that disastrously.
Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess,
Disparage each expedient else to praise,
Call failure folly ! Man's best effort fails.
After ten years' resistance Troy succumbed :
Could valor save a town, Troy still had stood.
Pompilia came off halting in no point
Of courage, conduct, her long journey through :
But nature sank exhausted at the close,
And as I said, she swooned and slept all night.
Morn breaks and brings the husband : we assist
At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds.
Ha, how is this ? What moonstruck rage is here ?
Though we confess to partial frailty now,
To error in a woman and a wife,
Is 't by the rough way she shall be reclaimed ?
Who bursts upon her chambered privacy ?
What crowd profanes the chaste *cubiculum ?*
What outcries and lewd laughter, scurril gibe
And ribald jest to scare the ministrant
Good angels that commerce with souls in sleep ?
Why, had the worst crowned Guido to his wish,
Confirmed his most irrational surmise,
Yet there be bounds to man's emotion, checks
To an immoderate astonishment.
'T is decent horror, regulated wrath,
Befit our dispensation : have we back
The old Pagan license ? Shall a Vulcan clap
His net o' the sudden and expose the pair
To the unquenchable universal mirth ?
A feat, antiquity saw scandal in
So clearly, that the nauseous tale thereof —
Demodocus his nugatory song —
Hath ever been concluded modern stuff

Impossible to the mouth of the grave Muse,
So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey
By some impertinent pickthank. O thou fool,
Count Guido Franceschini, what didst gain
By publishing thy secret to the world?
Were all the precepts of the wise a waste —
Bred in thee not one touch of reverence?
Admit thy wife — admonish we the fool, —
Were falseness' self, why chronicle thy shame?
Much rather should thy teeth bite out thy tongue,
Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,
Silence become historiographer,
And thou — thine own Cornelius Tacitus!
But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords!
— Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist
And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know!
Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,
Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,
Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,
Confronts the foe, — nay, catches at his sword
And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.
Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,
Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way,
With an exact obedience; he brought sword,
She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.
Tell not me 't is sharp play with tools on edge!
It was the husband chose the weapon here.
Why did not he inaugurate the game
With some gentility of apophthegm
Still pregnant on the philosophic page,
Some captivating cadence still a-lisp
O' the poet's lyre? Such spells subdue the surge,
Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate
The passions of the mind, and probably

Had moved Pompilia to a smiling blush.
No, he must needs prefer the argument
O' the blow: and she obeyed, in duty bound,
Returned him buffet ratiocinative —
Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,
For wife must follow whither husband leads,
Vindicate honor as himself prescribes,
Save him the very way himself bids save!
No question but who jumps into a quag
Should stretch forth hand and pray us "Pull me out
By the hand!" such were the customary cry:
But Guido pleased to bid "Leave hand alone!
Join both feet, rather, jump upon my head:
I extricate myself by the rebound!"
And dutifully as enjoined she jumped —
Drew his own sword and menaced his own life,
Anything to content a wilful spouse.

And so he was contented — one must do
Justice to the expedient which succeeds,
Strange as it seem: at flourish of the blade,
The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,
Then murmured "This should be no wanton wife,
No conscience-stricken sinner, caught i' the act,
And patiently awaiting our first stone:
But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,
Has rushed so far, misguidedly perhaps,
Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep.
She sought for aid; and if she made mistake
I' the man could aid most, why — so mortals do:
Even the blessed Magdalen mistook
Far less forgivably: consult the place —
Supposing him to be the gardener,
'Sir,' said she, and so following." Why more words?

Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent:
What would the husband more than gain his cause,
And find that honor flash in the world's eye,
His apprehension was lest soil had smirched?

So, happily the adventure comes to close
Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge
Preposterous: at mid-day he groans "How dark!"
Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine!
Where is the ambiguity to blame,
The flaw to find in our Pompilia? Safe
She stands, see! Does thy comment follow quick
"Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed;
But thither she picked way by devious path —
Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all!
I recognize success, yet, all the same,
Importunately will suggestion prompt —
Better Pompilia gained the right to boast
'No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,
I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot.'
Why, being in a peril, show mistrust
Of the angels set to guard the innocent?
Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help
Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused
Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,
Since low with high, and good with bad is linked?
Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.
There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,
Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,
Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest,
At a safe distance both distressful watch,
While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.
I look that, white and perfect to the end,
She wait till Jove despatch some demigod;

Not that, — impatient of celestial club
Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast, —
She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,
And so elude the purblind monster! Ay,
The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,
Where needs have been no trick!"

My answer? Faugh;
Nimis incongrue! Too absurdly put!
Sententiam ego teneo contrariam,
Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.
The heavens were bound with brass, — Jove far at feast
(No feast like that thou didst not ask me to,
Arcangeli, — I heard of thy regale!)
With the unblamed Æthiop, — Hercules spun wool
I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked —
The brute came paddling all the faster. You
Of Troy, who stood at distance, where 's the aid
You offered in the extremity? Most and least,
Gentle and simple, here the Governor,
There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,
Shook heads and waited for a miracle,
Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.
Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth!
— Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)
Who restored things, with no delay at all,
Qui haud cunctando rem restituit! He,
He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,
Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off
Through gaping impotence of sympathy
In ranged Arezzo: what you take for pitch,
Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,
Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands
Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe

Was more than duly energetic: bruised,
She smarts a little, but her bones are saved
A fracture, and her skin will soon show sleek.
How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,
Censures the honest rude effective strength, —
When sickly dreamers of the impossible
Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat
With eyes wide open!
Did occasion serve,
I could illustrate, if my lords allow;
Quid vetat, what forbids I aptly ask
With Horace, that I give my anger vent,
While I let breathe, no less, and recreate,
The gravity of my Judges, by a tale?
A case in point — what though an apologue
Graced by tradition? — possibly a fact:
Tradition must precede all scripture, words
Serve as our warrant ere our books can be:
So, to tradition back we needs must go
For any fact's authority: and this
Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in muck)
On page of that old lying vanity
Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu:" God be praised,
I read no Hebrew, — take the thing on trust:
But I believe the writer meant no good
(Blind as he was to truth in some respects)
To our pestiferous and schismatic . . . well,
My lords' conjecture be the touchstone, show
The thing for what it is! The author lacks
Discretion, and his zeal exceeds: but zeal, —
How rare in our degenerate day! Enough!
Here is the story: fear not, I shall chop
And change a little, else my Jew would press
All too unmannerly before the Court.

It happened once, — begins this foolish Jew,
Pretending to write Christian history, —
That three, held greatest, best and worst of men,
Peter and John and Judas, spent a day
In toil and travel through the country-side
On some sufficient business — I suspect,
Suppression of some Molinism i' the bud.
Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with fatigue,
They reached by nightfall a poor lonely grange,
Hostel or inn : so, knocked and entered there.
"Your pleasure, great ones?" — "Shelter, rest and food!"
For shelter, there was one bare room above;
For rest therein, three beds of bundled straw :
For food, one wretched starveling fowl, no more —
Meat for one mouth, but mockery for three.
"You have my utmost." How should supper serve?
Peter broke silence : "To the spit with fowl!
And while 't is cooking, sleep! — since beds there be,
And, so far, satisfaction of a want.
Sleep we an hour, awake at supper-time,
Then each of us narrate the dream he had,
And he whose dream shall prove the happiest, point
The clearliest out the dreamer as ordained
Beyond his fellows to receive the fowl,
Him let our shares be cheerful tribute to,
His the entire meal, may it do him good!"
Who could dispute so plain a consequence?
So said, so done : each hurried to his straw,
Slept his hour's sleep and dreamed his dream, and woke.
"I," commenced John, "dreamed that I gained the prize
We all aspire to : the proud place was mine,

Throughout the earth and to the end of time
I was the Loved Disciple: mine the meal!"
"But I," proceeded Peter, "dreamed, a word
Gave me the headship of our company,
Made me the Vicar and Vice-gerent, gave
The keys of heaven and hell into my hand,
And o'er the earth, dominion: mine the meal!" 1070
"While I," submitted in soft under-tone
The Iscariot — sense of his unworthiness
Turning each eye up to the inmost white —
With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both lips smack,
"I have had just the pitifullest dream
That ever proved man meanest of his mates,
And born foot-washer and foot-wiper, nay
Foot-kisser to each comrade of you all!
I dreamed I dreamed; and in that mimic dream
(Impalpable to dream as dream to fact) 1080
Methought I meanly chose to sleep no wink
But wait until I heard my brethren snore;
Then stole from couch, slipped noiseless o'er the planks,
Slid downstairs, furtively approached the hearth,
Found the fowl duly brown, both back and breast,
Hissing in harmony with the cricket's chirp,
Grilled to a point; said no grace but fell to,
Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.
In penitence for which ignoble dream,
Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully! 1090
Fie on the flesh — be mine the ethereal gust,
And yours the sublunary sustenance!
See that whate'er be left ye give the poor!"
Down the two scuttled, one on other's heel,
Stung by a fell surmise; and found, alack,
A goodly savor, both the drumstick bones,
And that which henceforth took the appropriate name

O' the Merry-thought, in memory of the fact
That to keep wide awake is man's best dream.

So, — as was said once of Thucydides
And his sole joke, "The lion, lo, hath laughed!" —
Just so, the Governor and all that 's great
I' the city, never meant that Innocence
Should quite starve while Authority sat at meat;
They meant to fling a bone at banquet's end:
Wished well to our Pompilia — in their dreams,
Nor bore the secular sword in vain — asleep.
Just so the Archbishop and all good like him
Went to bed meaning to pour oil and wine
I' the wounds of her, next day, — but long ere day,
They had burned the one and drunk the other, while
Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest
Sustained poor Nature in extremity
By stuffing barley-bread into her mouth,
Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)
By the plain homely and straightforward way
Taught him by common sense. Let others shriek
"Oh what refined expedients did we dream
Proved us the only fit to help the fair!"
He cried "A carriage waits, jump in with me!"

And now, this application pardoned, lords, —
This recreative pause and breathing-while, —
Back to beseemingness and gravity!
For Law steps in: Guido appeals to Law,
Demands she arbitrate, — does well for once.
O Law, of thee how neatly was it said
By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy seat
I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier throned!
Here is a piece of work now, hitherto
Begun and carried on, concluded near,

Without an eye-glance cast thy sceptre's way;
And, lo the stumbling and discomfiture!
Well may you call them "lawless" means, men take
To extricate themselves through mother-wit
When tangled haply in the toils of life!
Guido would try conclusions with his foe,
Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the offence;
He would recover certain dowry-dues:
Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,
What pother of sword drawn and pistol cocked,
What peddling with forged letters and paid spies,
Politic circumvention! — all to end
As it began — by loss of the fool's head,
First in a figure, presently in a fact.
It is a lesson to mankind at large.
How other were the end, would men be sage
And bear confidingly each quarrel straight,
O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees!
How would the children light come and prompt go,
This with a red-cheeked apple for reward,
The other, peradventure red-cheeked too
I' the rear, by taste of birch for punishment.
No foolish brawling murder any more!
Peace for the household, practice for the Fisc,
And plenty for the exchequer of my lords!
Too much to hope, in this world: in the next,
Who knows? Since, why should sit the Twelve enthroned
To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be judged?
And 't is impossible but offences come:
So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-day!

Forgive me this digression — that I stand
Entranced awhile at Law's first beam, outbreak

O' the business, when the Count's good angel bade
"Put up thy sword, born enemy to the ear,
And let Law listen to thy difference!"
And Law does listen and compose the strife,
Settle the suit, how wisely and how well!
On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,
Law bends a brow maternally severe,
Implies the worth of perfect chastity,
By fancying the flaw she cannot find.
Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps nor harms:
'T is safe to censure levity in youth,
Tax womanhood with indiscretion, sure!
Since toys, permissible to-day, become
Follies to-morrow: prattle shocks in church:
And that curt skirt which lets a maiden skip,
The matron changes for a trailing robe.
Mothers may aim a blow with half-shut eyes
Nodding above their spindles by the fire,
And chance to hit some hidden fault, else safe.
Just so, Law hazarded a punishment —
If applicable to the circumstance,
Why, well! if not so apposite, well too.
"Quit the gay range o' the world," I hear her cry,
"Enter, in lieu, the penitential pound:
Exchange the gauds of pomp for ashes, dust!
Leave each mollitious haunt of luxury!
The golden-garnished silken-couched alcove,
The many-columned terrace that so tempts
Feminine soul put foot forth, extend ear
To fluttering joy of lover's serenade, —
Leave these for cellular seclusion! mask
And dance no more, but fast and pray! avaunt —
Be burned, thy wicked townsman's sonnet-book!
Welcome, mild hymnal by . . . some better scribe!

For the warm arms were wont enfold thy flesh,
Let wire-shirt plough and whipcord discipline ! ”
If such an exhortation proved, perchance,
Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste,
What harm, since Law has store, can spend nor miss ?

And so, our paragon submits herself,
Goes at command into the holy house,
And, also at command, comes out again :
For, could the effect of such obedience prove
Too certain, too immediate ? Being healed,
Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed one !
Art thou sound forthwith ? Speedily vacate
The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda free
To patients plentifully posted round,
Since the whole need not the physician ! Brief,
She may betake her to her parents' place.
Welcome her, father, with wide arms once more,
Motion her, mother, to thy breast again !
For why ? Since Law relinquishes the charge,
Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's style,
Rejoice you with Pompilia ! golden days,
Redeunt Saturnia regna. Six weeks slip,
And she is domiciled in house and home
As though she thence had never budged at all.
And thither let the husband, — joyous, ay,
But contrite also — quick betake himself,
Proud that his dove which lay among the pots
Hath mued those dingy feathers, — moulted now,
Shows silver bosom clothed with yellow gold !
So shall he tempt her to the perch she fled,
Bid to domestic bliss the truant back.

But let him not delay ! Time fleets how fast,
And opportunity, the irrevocable,

Once flown will flout him ! Is the furrow traced ?
If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,
Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for grain,
Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,
Will grow apace in combination prompt,
Defraud the husbandman of his desire.
Already — hist — what murmurs 'monish now
The laggard ? — doubtful, nay, fantastic bruit
Of such an apparition, such return
Interdum, to anticipate the spouse,
Of Caponsacchi's very self ! 'T is said,
When nights are lone and company is rare,
His visitations brighten winter up.
If so they did — which nowise I believe —
(How can I ? — proof abounding that the priest,
Once fairly at his relegation-place,
Never once left it) still, admit he stole
A midnight march, would fain see friend again,
Find matter for instruction in the past,
Renew the old adventure in such chat
As cheers a fireside ! He was lonely too,
He, too, must need his recreative hour.
Shall it amaze the philosophic mind
If he, long wont the empurpled cup to quaff,
Have feminine society at will,
Being debarred abruptly from all drink
Save at the spring which Adam used for wine,
Dreads harm to just the health he hoped to guard,
And, trying abstinence, gains malady ?
Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope !
" Little by little break " — (I hear he bids
Master Arcangeli my antagonist,
Who loves good cheer, and may indulge too much :
So I explain the logic of the plea

Wherewith he opened our proceedings late) —
"Little by little break a habit, Don,
Become necessity to feeble flesh!"
And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse
(Which never happened, — but, suppose it did)
May have been used to dishabituate
By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs
O' the draught of conversation, — heady stuff,
Brewage which, broached, it took two days and nights
To properly discuss i' the journey, Sirs!
Such power has second nature, men call use,
That undelightful objects get to charm
Instead of chafe: the daily colocynth
Tickles the palate by repeated dose,
Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes a push
Although the mill-yoke-wound be smarting yet,
For mill-door bolted on a holiday:
Nor must we marvel here if impulse urge
To talk the old story over now and then,
The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the haste, —
Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once.
"Here did you bid me twine a rosy wreath!"
"And there you paid my lips a compliment!"
"Here you admired the tower could be so tall!"
"And there you likened that of Lebanon
To the nose of the beloved!" Trifles! still,
"*Forsan et hæc olim*," — such trifles serve
To make the minutes pass in winter-time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee!
For, finally, of all glad circumstance
Should make a prompt return imperative,
What in the world awaits thee, dost suppose?
O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont befall,

What is the hap of our unconscious Count?
That which lights bonfire and sets cask a-tilt,
Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.
O admirable, there is born a babe,
A son, an heir, a Franceschini last
And best o' the stock! Pompilia, thine the palm!
Repaying incredulity with faith,
Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt
With bounty in profuse expenditure,
Pompilia scorns to have the old year end
Without a present shall ring in the new —
Bestows on her too-parsimonious lord
An infant for the apple of his eye,
Core of his heart, and crown completing life,
True *summum bonum* of the earthly lot!
"We," saith ingeniously the sage, "are born
Solely that others may be born of us."
So, father, take thy child, for thine that child,
Oh nothing doubt! In wedlock born, law holds
Baseness impossible: since "*filius est*
Quem nuptiæ demonstrant," twits the text
Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dares!
O faith, where art thou flown from out the world?
Already on what an age of doubt we fall!
Instead of each disputing for the prize,
The babe is bandied here from that to this.
Whose the babe? "*Cujum pecus?*" Guido's lamb?
"*An Melibœi?*" Nay, but of the priest!
"*Non sed Ægonis!*" Some one must be sire:
And who shall say, in such a puzzling strait,
If there were not vouchsafed some miracle
To the wife who had been harassed and abused

More than enough by Guido's family
For non-production of the promised fruit
Of marriage? What if Nature, I demand,
Touched to the quick by taunts upon her sloth,
Had roused herself, put forth recondite power,
Bestowed this birth to vindicate her sway,
Like the strange favor, Maro memorized
As granted Aristæus when his hive
Lay empty of the swarm? not one more bee —
Not one more babe to Franceschini's house!
And lo, a new birth filled the air with joy,
Sprung from the bowels of the generous steer,
A novel son and heir rejoiced the Count!
Spontaneous generation, need I prove
Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch?
Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair certain weeks
In water, there will be produced a snake;
Spontaneous product of the horse, which horse
Happens to be the representative —
Now that I think on 't — of Arezzo's self,
The very city our conception blessed:
Is not a prancing horse the City-arms?
What sane eye fails to see coincidence?
Cur ego, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,
Desperem fieri sine conjuge
Mater — how well the Ovidian distich suits! —
Et parere intacto dummodo
Casta viro? Such miracle was wrought!
Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,
The babe in question neither took the name
Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor
Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but
Gaetano — last saint of our hierarchy,
And newest namer for a thing so new!

What other motive could have prompted choice?
Therefore be peace again : exult, ye hills !
Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song !
Incipe parve puer, begin, small boy,
Risu cognoscere patrem, with a laugh
To recognize thy parent ! Nor do thou
Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace !
Nec anceps hære, pater, puero
Cognoscendo — one may well eke out the prayer !
In vain ! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes,
Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive.
Because his house is swept and garnished now,
He, having summoned seven like himself,
Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,
And make the last worse than the first, indeed !
Is he content ? We are. No further blame
O' the man and murder ! They were stigmatized
Befittingly : the Court heard long ago
My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,
Has long since swept like surge, i' the simile
Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,
And whelmed alike client and advocate :
His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,
On him I am not tempted to waste word.
Yet though my purpose holds, — which was and is
And solely shall be to the very end,
To draw the true *effigies* of a saint,
Do justice to perfection in the sex, —
Yet let not some gross pamperer of the flesh
And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,
Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit
Rather than law, — he never had, to lose —
Let not such advocate object to me
I leave my proper function of attack !

"What 's this to Bacchus?" — (in the classic phrase,
Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.
O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make
Their blessing void — *beati pauperes!*
By painting saintship I depicture sin:
Beside my pearl, I prove how black thy jet,
And, through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's crime.

Back to her, then, — with but one beauty more,
End we our argument, — one crowning grace
Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.
For to the last Pompilia played her part,
Used the right means to the permissible end,
And wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,
She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,
Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,
Whereby she told her story to the world,
Enabled me to make the present speech,
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last,
Gurgle its choked remonstrance: snake, hiss free!
Oh, that 's the objection? And to whom? — not her
But me, forsooth — as, in the very act
Of both confession and (what followed close)
Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,
Babble to sympathizing he and she
Whoever chose besiege her dying bed, —
As this were found at variance with my tale,
Falsified all I have adduced for truth,
Admitted not one peccadillo here,
Pretended to perfection, first and last.

O' the whole procedure — perfect in the end,
Perfect i' the means, perfect in everything,
Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,
Reason away and show his skill about!
— A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,
Just to be fancied, scarcely to be wished,
And, anyhow, unpleadable in court!
"How reconcile," gasps Malice, "that with this?"

Your "this," friend, is extraneous to the law,
Comes of men's outside meddling, the unskilled
Interposition of such fools as press
Out of their province. Must I speak my mind? 1440
Far better had Pompilia died o' the spot
Than found a tongue to wag and shame the law,
Shame most of all herself, — could friendship fail
And advocacy lie less on the alert:
But no, they shall protect her to the end!
Do I credit the alleged narration? No!
Lied our Pompilia then, to laud herself?
Still, no! Clear up what seems discrepancy?
The means abound: art's long, though time is short;
So, keeping me in compass, all I urge
Is — since, confession at the point of death,
Nam in articulo mortis, with the Church
Passes for statement honest and sincere,
Nemo presumitur reus esse,— then,
If sure that all affirmed would be believed,
'T was charity, in her so circumstanced,
To spend the last breath in one effort more
For universal good of friend and foe:
And, — by pretending utter innocence,
Nay, freedom from each foible we forgive,
Re-integrate — not solely her own fame,

But do the like kind office for the priest
Whom telling the crude truth about might vex,
Haply expose to peril, abbreviate
Indeed the long career of usefulness
Presumably before him: while her lord,
Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law, —
What mercy to the culprit if, by just
The gift of such a full certificate
Of his immitigable guiltiness,
She stifled in him the absurd conceit
Of murder as it were a mere revenge
— Stopped confirmation of that jealousy
Which, did she but acknowledge the first flaw,
The faintest foible, had emboldened him
To battle with the charge, balk penitence,
Bar preparation for impending fate!
Whereas, persuade him that he slew a saint
Who sinned not even where she may have sinned,
You urge him all the brisklier to repent
Of most and least and aught and everything!
Still, if this view of mine content you not,
Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood here,
We come to our *Triarii*, last resource:
We fall back on the inexpugnable,
Submitting, — she confessed before she talked!
The sacrament obliterates the sin:
What is not, — was not, therefore, in a sense.
Let Molinists distinguish, "Souls washed white
But red once, still show pinkish to the eye!"
We say, abolishment is nothingness,
And nothingness has neither head nor tail,
End nor beginning! Better estimate
Exorbitantly, than disparage aught
Of the efficacity of the act, I hope!

Solvuntur tabulæ? May we laugh and go?
Well, — not before (in filial gratitude
To Law, who, mighty mother, waves adieu)
We take on us to vindicate Law's self!
For, — yea, Sirs, — curb the start, curtail the stare! —
Remains that we apologize for haste
I' the Law, our lady who here bristles up
"Blame my procedure? Could the Court mistake?
(Which were indeed a misery to think)
Did not my sentence in the former stage
O' the business bear a title plain enough?
Decretum" — I translate it word for word —
"'Decreed: the priest, for his complicity
I' the flight and deviation of the dame,
As well as for unlawful intercourse,
Is banished three years:' crime and penalty,
Declared alike. If he be taxed with guilt,
How can you call Pompilia innocent?
If both be innocent, have I been just?"

Gently, O mother, judge men — whose mistake
Is in the mere misapprehensiveness!
The *Titulus* a-top of your decree
Was but to ticket there the kind of charge
You in good time would arbitrate upon.
Title is one thing, — arbitration's self,
Probatio, quite another possibly.
Subsistit, there holds good the old response,
Responsio tradita, we must not stick,
Quod non sit attendendus Titulus,
To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but the Proof,
Resultans ex processu, the result
O' the Trial, and the style of punishment,
Et pœna per sententiam imposita.

All is tentative, till the sentence come:
An indication of what men expect,
But nowise an assurance they shall find.
Lords, what if we permissibly relax
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus bids,
Relieve our gravity at labor's close?
I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a draught,
Look for a wine-shop, find it by the bough
Projecting as to say "Here wine is sold!"
So much I know, — "sold:" but what sort of wine?
Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made or foreign drink?
That much must I discover by myself.
"Wine is sold," quoth the bough, "but good or bad,
Find, and inform us when you smack your lips!"
Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,
To show she entertains you with such case
About such crime. Come in! she pours, you quaff.
You find the Priest good liquor in the main,
But heady and provocative of brawls:
Remand the residue to flask once more,
Lay it low where it may deposit lees,
I' the cellar: thence produce it presently,
Three years the brighter and the better!

Thus,
Law's son, have I bestowed my filial help,
And thus I end, *tenax proposito;*
Point to point as I purposed have I drawn
Pompilia, and implied as terribly
Guido: so, gazing, let the world crown Law —
Able once more, despite my impotence,
And helped by the acumen of the Court,

To eliminate, display, make triumph truth!
What other prize than truth were worth the pains?

There 's my oration — much exceeds in length
That famed panegyric of Isocrates,
They say it took him fifteen years to pen.
But all those ancients could say anything!
He put in just what rushed into his head:
While I shall have to prune and pare and print.
This comes of being born in modern times
With priests for auditory. Still, it pays.

X.

THE POPE.

[The final judgment being left to the Pope, his decision is against Guido. In this book he goes over the arguments that have led him to this decision, with the assurance that, should he have judged wrongly, God will accept his action because it has been instigated by a conscientious desire to find the truth. Except in Pompilia, whom he finds entirely worthy of praise, and Caponsacchi, whose sin in breaking priestly vows he justifies, he discovers avarice on all sides as the chief motive of action. Guido is denounced above all, because he had had the best opportunities for development, and because he has not availed himself of the several chances of repentance offered him. Overwhelmed with the predominance of evil, the Pope falls into religious philosophizing, finding in the purity and love of Pompilia a symbol of the assurance that through love the world will be saved, and in doubt, the spur to greater faith. His hope is that the summary sentence he pronounces on Guido may cause repentance, but he feels he dare not die without doing his utmost to avenge the wrong done by this man.]

Like to Ahasuerus, that shrewd prince,
I will begin, — as is, these seven years now,
My daily wont, — and read a History
(Written by one whose deft right hand was dust
To the last digit, ages ere my birth)
Of all my predecessors, Popes of Rome:
For though mine ancient early dropped the pen,
Yet others picked it up and wrote it dry,

Since of the making books there is no end.
And so I have the Papacy complete
From Peter first to Alexander last;
Can question each and take instruction so.
Have I to dare? —I ask, how dared this Pope?
To suffer? — Suchanone, how suffered he?
Being about to judge, as now, I seek
How judged once, well or ill, some other Pope;
Study some signal judgment that subsists
To blaze on, or else blot, the page which seals
The sum up of what gain or loss to God
Came of His one more Vicar in the world.
So, do I find example, rule of life;
So, square and set in order the next page,
Shall be stretched smooth o'er my own funeral cyst.

Eight hundred years exact before the year
I was made Pope, men made Formosus Pope,
Say Sigebert and other chroniclers.
Ere I confirm or quash the Trial here
Of Guido Franceschini and his friends,
Read, — How there was a ghastly Trial once
Of a dead man by a live man, and both, Popes:
Thus — in the antique penman's very phrase.

"Then Stephen, Pope and seventh of the name,
Cried out, in synod as he sat in state,
While choler quivered on his brow and beard,
'Come into court, Formosus, thou lost wretch,
That claimedst to be late Pope as even I!'

"And at the word the great door of the church
Flew wide, and in they brought Formosus' self,
The body of him, dead, even as embalmed

And buried duly in the Vatican
Eight months before, exhumed thus for the nonce.
They set it, that dead body of a Pope,
Clothed in pontific vesture now again,
Upright on Peter's chair as if alive.

"And Stephen, springing up, cried furiously
'Bishop of Porto, wherefore didst presume
To leave that see and take this Roman see,
Exchange the lesser for the greater see,
— A thing against the canons of the Church?'

"Then one — (a Deacon who, observing forms,
Was placed by Stephen to repel the charge,
Be advocate and mouthpiece of the corpse) —
Spoke as he dared, set stammeringly forth
With white lips and dry tongue, — as but a youth,
For frightful was the corpse-face to behold, —
How nowise lacked there precedent for this.

"But when, for his last precedent of all,
Emboldened by the Spirit, out he blurts
'And, Holy Father, didst not thou thyself
Vacate the lesser for the greater see,
Half a year since change Arago for Rome?'
'— Ye have the sin's defence now, Synod mine!'
Shrieks Stephen in a beastly froth of rage:
'Judge now betwixt him dead and me alive!
Hath he intruded, or do I pretend?
Judge, judge!' — breaks wavelike one whole foam of wrath.

"Whereupon they, being friends and followers,
Said 'Ay, thou art Christ's Vicar, and not he!

Away with what is frightful to behold!
This act was uncanonic and a fault.'

"Then, swallowed up in rage, Stephen exclaimed
'So, guilty! So, remains I punish guilt!
He is unpoped, and all he did I damn:
The Bishop, that ordained him, I degrade:
Depose to laics those he raised to priests:
What they have wrought is mischief nor shall stand,
It is confusion, let it vex no more!
Since I revoke, annul and abrogate
All his decrees in all kinds: they are void!
In token whereof and warning to the world,
Strip me yon miscreant of those robes usurped,
And clothe him with vile serge befitting such!
Then hale the carrion to the market-place:
Let the town-hangman chop from his right hand
Those same three fingers which he blessed withal;
Next cut the head off once was crowned forsooth:
And last go fling them, fingers, head and trunk,
To Tiber that my Christian fish may sup!'
— Either because of ΙΧΘΥΣ which means Fish
And very aptly symbolizes Christ,
Or else because the Pope is Fisherman,
And seals with Fisher's-signet.

"Anyway,
So said, so done: himself, to see it done,
Followed the corpse they trailed from street to street
Till into Tiber wave they threw the thing.
The people, crowded on the banks to see,
Were loud or mute, wept or laughed, cursed or jeered,
According as the deed addressed their sense;
A scandal verily: and out spake a Jew
'Wot ye your Christ had vexed our Herod thus?'

"Now when, Formosus being dead a year,
His judge Pope Stephen tasted death in turn,
Made captive by the mob and strangled straight,
Romanus his successor for a month,
Did make protest Formosus was with God,
Holy, just, true in thought and word and deed.
Next Theodore, who reigned but twenty days,
Therein convoked a synod, whose decree
Did reinstate, repope the late unpoped,
And do away with Stephen as accursed.
So that when presently certain fisher-folk
(As if the queasy river could not hold
Its swallowed Jonas, but discharged the meal)
Produced the timely product of their nets,
The mutilated man, Formosus, — saved
From putrefaction by the embalmer's spice,
Or, as some said, by sanctity of flesh, —
'Why, lay the body again,' bade Theodore,
'Among his predecessors, in the church
And burial-place of Peter!' which was done.
'And,' addeth Luitprand, 'many of repute,
Pious and still alive, avouch to me
That, as they bore the body up the aisle,
The saints in imaged row bowed each his head
For welcome to a brother-saint come back.'
As for Romanus and this Theodore,
These two Popes, through the brief reign granted each,
Could but initiate what John came to close
And give the final stamp to: he it was
Ninth of the name, (I follow the best guides)
Who, — in full synod at Ravenna held
With Bishops seventy-four, and present too
Eude King of France with his Archbishopry, —
Did condemn Stephen, anathematize

The disinterment, and make all blots blank,
'For,' argueth here Auxilius in a place
De Ordinationibus, 'precedents
Had been, no lack, before Formosus long,
Of Bishops so transferred from see to see,
Marinus, for example:' read the tract.

"But, after John, came Sergius, reaffirmed
The right of Stephen, cursed Formosus, nay
Cast out, some say, his corpse a second time.
And here, — because the matter went to ground,
Fretted by new griefs, other cares of the age, —
Here is the last pronouncing of the Church,
Her sentence that subsists unto this day.
Yet constantly opinion hath prevailed
I' the Church, Formosus was a holy man."

Which of the judgments was infallible?
Which of my predecessors spoke for God?
And what availed Formosus that this cursed,
That blessed, and then this other cursed again?
"Fear ye not those whose power can kill the body
And not the soul," saith Christ, "but rather those
Can cast both soul and body into hell!"

John judged thus in Eight Hundred Ninety Eight,
Exact eight hundred years ago to-day.
When, sitting in his stead, Vice-gerent here,
I must give judgment on my own behoof.
So worked the predecessor: now, my turn!

In God's name! Once more on this earth of God's,
While twilight lasts and time wherein to work,
I take His staff with my uncertain hand,
And stay my six and fourscore years, my due

Labor and sorrow, on His judgment-seat,
And forthwith think, speak, act, in place of Him —
The Pope for Christ. Once more appeal is made
From man's assize to mine : I sit and see
Another poor weak trembling human wretch
Pushed by his fellows, who pretend the right,
Up to the gulf which, where I gaze, begins
From this world to the next, — gives way and way,
Just on the edge over the awful dark :
With nothing to arrest him but my feet.
He catches at me with convulsive face,
Cries "Leave to live the natural minute more!"
While hollowly the avengers echo "Leave?
None! So has he exceeded man's due share
In man's fit license, wrung by Adam's fall,
To sin and yet not surely die, — that we,
All of us sinful, all with need of grace,
All chary of our life, — the minute more
Or minute less of grace which saves a soul, —
Bound to make common cause with who craves time,
— We yet protest against the exorbitance
Of sin in this one sinner, and demand
That his poor sole remaining piece of time
Be plucked from out his clutch : put him to death!
Punish him now! As for the weal or woe
Hereafter, God grant mercy! Man be just,
Nor let the felon boast he went scot-free!"
And I am bound, the solitary judge,
To weigh the worth, decide upon the plea,
And either hold a hand out, or withdraw
A foot and let the wretch drift to the fall.
Ay, and while thus I dally, dare perchance
Put fancies for a comfort 'twixt this calm
And yonder passion that I have to bear, —

As if reprieve were possible for both
Prisoner and Pope, — how easy were reprieve !
A touch o' the hand-bell here, a hasty word
To those who wait, and wonder they wait long,
I' the passage there, and I should gain the life ! —
Yea, though I flatter me with fancy thus,
I know it is but nature's craven-trick.
The case is over, judgment at an end,
And all things done now and irrevocable :
A mere dead man is Franceschini here,
Even as Formosus centuries ago.
I have worn through this sombre wintry day,
With winter in my soul beyond the world's,
Over these dismalest of documents
Which drew night down on me ere eve befell, —
Pleadings and counter-pleadings, figure of fact
Beside fact's self, these summaries to-wit, —
How certain three were slain by certain five :
I read here why it was, and how it went,
And how the chief o' the five preferred excuse,
And how law rather chose defence should lie, —
What argument he urged by wary word
When free to play off wile, start subterfuge,
And what the unguarded groan told, torture's feat
When law grew brutal, outbroke, overbore
And glutted hunger on the truth, at last, —
No matter for the flesh and blood between.
All 's a clear rede and no more riddle now.
Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these —
Not absolutely in a portion, yet
Evolvible from the whole : evolved at last
Painfully, held tenaciously by me.
Therefore there is not any doubt to clear
When I shall write the brief word presently

And chink the hand-bell, which I pause to do.
Irresolute? Not I, more than the mound
With the pine-trees on it yonder! Some surmise,
Perchance, that since man's wit is fallible,
Mine may fail here? Suppose it so, — what then?
Say, — Guido, I count guilty, there 's no babe
So guiltless, for I misconceive the man!
What 's in the chance should move me from my mind?
If, as I walk in a rough country-side,
Peasants of mine cry "Thou art he can help,
Lord of the land and counted wise to boot:
Look at our brother, strangling in his foam,
He fell so where we find him, — prove thy worth!"
I may presume, pronounce, "A frenzy-fit,
A falling-sickness or a fever-stroke!
Breathe a vein, copiously let blood at once!"
So perishes the patient, and anon
I hear my peasants — "All was error, lord!
Our story, thy prescription: for there crawled
In due time from our hapless brother's breast
The serpent which had stung him: bleeding slew
Whom a prompt cordial had restored to health."
What other should I say than "God so willed:
Mankind is ignorant, a man am I:
Call ignorance my sorrow, not my sin!"
So and not otherwise, in after-time,
If some acuter wit, fresh probing, sound
This multifarious mass of words and deeds
Deeper, and reach through guilt to innocence,
I shall face Guido's ghost nor blench a jot.
"God who set me to judge thee, meted out
So much of judging faculty, no more:
Ask Him if I was slack in use thereof!"
I hold a heavier fault imputable

Inasmuch as I changed a chaplain once,
For no cause, — no, if I must bare my heart, —
Save that he snuffled somewhat saying mass.
For I am ware it is the seed of act,
God holds appraising in His hollow palm,
Not act grown great thence on the world below,
Leafage and branchage, vulgar eyes admire.
Therefore I stand on my integrity,
Nor fear at all: and if I hesitate,
It is because I need to breathe awhile,
Rest, as the human right allows, review
Intent the little seeds of act, my tree, —
The thought, which, clothed in deed, I give the world
At chink of bell and push of arrased door.

O pale departure, dim disgrace of day!
Winter's in wane, his vengeful worst art thou,
To dash the boldness of advancing March!
Thy chill persistent rain has purged our streets
Of gossipry; pert tongue and idle ear
By this, consort 'neath archway, portico.
But wheresoe'er Rome gathers in the gray,
Two names now snap and flash from mouth to mouth —
(Sparks, flint and steel strike) Guido and the Pope.
By this same hour to-morrow eve — aha,
How do they call him? — the sagacious Swede
Who finds by figures how the chances prove,
Why one comes rather than another thing,
As, say, such dots turn up by throw of dice,
Or, if we dip in Virgil here and there
And prick for such a verse, when such shall point.
Take this Swede, tell him, hiding name and rank,
Two men are in our city this dull eve;
One doomed to death, — but hundreds in such plight

Slip aside, clean escape by leave of law
Which leans to mercy in this latter time;
Moreover in the plenitude of life
Is he, with strength of limb and brain adroit,
Presumably of service here: beside,
The man is noble, backed by nobler friends:
Nay, they so wish him well, the city's self
Makes common cause with who — house-magistrate,
Patron of hearth and home, domestic lord —
But ruled his own, let aliens cavil. Die?
He 'll bribe a jailer or break prison first!
Nay, a sedition may be helpful, give
Hint to the mob to batter wall, burn gate,
And bid the favorite malefactor march.
Calculate now these chances of escape!
"It is not probable, but well may be."
Again, there is another man, weighed now
By twice eight years beyond the seven-times-ten,
Appointed overweight to break our branch.
And this man's loaded branch lifts, more than snow,
All the world's cark and care, though a bird's nest
Were a superfluous burthen: notably
Hath he been pressed, as if his age were youth,
From to-day's dawn till now that day departs,
Trying one question with true sweat of soul
"Shall the said doomed man fitlier die or live?"
When a straw swallowed in his posset, stool
Stumbled on where his path lies, any puff
That 's incident to such a smoking flax,
Hurries the natural end and quenches him!
Now calculate, thou sage, the chances here,
Say, which shall die the sooner, this or that?
"That, possibly, this in all likelihood."
I thought so: yet thou tripp'st, my foreign friend!

No, it will be quite otherwise, — to-day
Is Guido's last: my term is yet to run.

But say the Swede were right, and I forthwith
Acknowledge a prompt summons and lie dead:
Why, then I stand already in God's face
And hear "Since by its fruit a tree is judged,
Show me thy fruit, the latest act of thine!
For in the last is summed the first and all, —
What thy life last put heart and soul into,
There shall I taste thy product." I must plead
This condemnation of a man to-day.

Not so! Expect nor question nor reply
At what we figure as God's judgment-bar!
None of this vile way by the barren words
Which, more than any deed, characterize
Man as made subject to a curse: no speech —
That still bursts o'er some lie which lurks inside,
As the split skin across the coppery snake,
And most denotes man! since, in all beside,
In hate or lust or guile or unbelief,
Out of some core of truth the excrescence comes,
And, in the last resort, the man may urge
"So was I made, a weak thing that gave way
To truth, to impulse only strong since true,
And hated, lusted, used guile, forewent faith."
But when man walks the garden of this world
For his own solace, and, unchecked by law,
Speaks or keeps silence as himself sees fit,
Without the least incumbency to lie,
— Why, can he tell you what a rose is like,
Or how the birds fly, and not slip to false
Though truth serve better? Man must tell his mate

Of you, me and himself, knowing he lies,
Knowing his fellow knows the same, — will think
"He lies, it is the method of a man!"
And yet will speak for answer "It is truth"
To him who shall rejoin "Again a lie!"
Therefore these filthy rags of speech, this coil
Of statement, comment, query and response,
Tatters all too contaminate for use,
Have no renewing: He, the Truth, is, too,
The Word. We men, in our degree, may know
There, simply, instantaneously, as here
After long time and amid many lies,
Whatever we dare think we know indeed
— That I am I, as He is He, — what else?
But be man's method for man's life at least!
Wherefore, Antonio Pignatelli, thou
My ancient self, who wast no Pope so long
But studiedst God and man, the many years
I' the school, i' the cloister, in the diocese
Domestic, legate-rule in foreign lands, —
Thou other force in those old busy days
Than this gray ultimate decrepitude, —
Yet sensible of fires that more and more
Visit a soul, in passage to the sky,
Left nakeder than when flesh-robe was new —
Thou, not Pope but the mere old man o' the world,
Supposed inquisitive and dispassionate,
Wilt thou, the one whose speech I somewhat trust,
Question the after-me, this self now Pope,
Hear his procedure, criticise his work?
Wise in its generation is the world.

This is why Guido is found reprobate.
I see him furnished forth for his career,

On starting for the life-chance in our world,
With nearly all we count sufficient help :
Body and mind in balance, a sound frame,
A solid intellect : the wit to seek,
Wisdom to choose, and courage wherewithal
To deal in whatsoever circumstance
Should minister to man, make life succeed.
Oh, and much drawback ! what were earth without ?
Is this our ultimate stage, or starting-place
To try man's foot, if it will creep or climb,
'Mid obstacles in seeming, points that prove
Advantage for who vaults from low to high
And makes the stumbling-block a stepping-stone ?
So, Guido, born with appetite, lacks food :
Is poor, who yet could deftly play-off wealth :
Straitened, whose limbs are restless till at large.
He, as he eyes each outlet of the cirque
And narrow penfold for probation, pines
After the good things just outside its grate,
With less monition, fainter conscience-twitch,
Rarer instinctive qualm at the first feel
Of greed unseemly, prompting grasp undue,
Than nature furnishes her main mankind, —
Making it harder to do wrong than right
The first time, careful lest the common ear
Break measure, miss the outstep of life's march
Wherein I see a trial fair and fit
For one else too unfairly fenced about,
Set above sin, beyond his fellows here :
Guarded from the arch-tempter all must fight,
By a great birth, traditionary name,
Diligent culture, choice companionship,
Above all, conversancy with the faith
Which puts forth for its base of doctrine just

"Man is born nowise to content himself,
But please God." He accepted such a rule,
Recognized man's obedience ; and the Church,
Which simply is such rule's embodiment,
He clave to, he held on by, — nay, indeed,
Near pushed inside of, deep as layman durst,
Professed so much of priesthood as might sue
For priest's exemption where the layman sinned, —
Got his arm frocked which, bare, the law would bruise.
Hence, at this moment, what 's his last resource,
His extreme stay and utmost stretch of hope
But that, — convicted of such crime as law
Wipes not away save with a worldling's blood, —
Guido, the three-parts consecrate, may 'scape ?
Nay, the portentous brothers of the man
Are veritably priests, protected each
May do his murder in the Church's pale,
Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo !
This is the man proves irreligiousest
Of all mankind, religion's parasite !
This may forsooth plead dinned ear, jaded sense,
The vice o' the watcher who bides near the bell,
Sleeps sound because the clock is vigilant,
And cares not whether it be shade or shine,
Doling out day and night to all men else !
Why was the choice o' the man to niche himself
Perversely 'neath the tower where Time's own tongue
Thus undertakes to sermonize the world ?
Why, but because the solemn is safe too,
The belfry proves a fortress of a sort,
Has other uses than to teach the hour :
Turns sunscreen, paravent and ombrifuge
To whoso seeks a shelter in its pale,
— Ay, and attractive to unwary folk

Who gaze at storied portal, statued spire,
And go home with full head but empty purse,
Nor dare suspect the sacristan the thief!
Shall Judas, — hard upon the donor's heel,
To filch the fragments of the basket, — plead
He was too near the preacher's mouth, nor sat
Attent with fifties in a company?
No, — closer to promulgated decree,
Clearer the censure of default. Proceed!

I find him bound, then, to begin life well;
Fortified by propitious circumstance,
Great birth, good breeding, with the Church for guide,
How lives he? Cased thus in a coat of proof,
Mailed like a man-at-arms, though all the while
A puny starveling, — does the breast pant big,
The limb swell to the limit, emptiness
Strive to become solidity indeed?
Rather, he shrinks up like the ambiguous fish,
Detaches flesh from shell and outside show,
And steals by moonlight (I have seen the thing)
In and out, now to prey and now to skulk.
Armor he boasts when a wave breaks on beach,
Or bird stoops for the prize: with peril nigh, —
The man of rank, the much-befriended-man,
The man almost affiliate to the Church,
Such is to deal with, let the world beware!
Does the world recognize, pass prudently?
Do tides abate and sea-fowl hunt i' the deep?
Already is the slug from out its mew,
Ignobly faring with all loose and free,
Sand-fly and slush-worm at their garbage-feast,
A naked blotch no better than they all:
Guido has dropped nobility, slipped the Church,

Plays trickster if not cut-purse, body and soul
Prostrate among the filthy feeders — faugh !
And when Law takes him by surprise at last,
Catches the foul thing on its carrion-prey,
Behold, he points to shell left high and dry,
Pleads "But the case out yonder is myself!"
Nay, it is thou, Law prongs amid thy peers,
Congenial vermin ; that was none of thee,
Thine outside, — give it to the soldier-crab !

For I find this black mark impinge the man,
That he believes in just the vile of life.
Low instinct, base pretension, are these truth ?
Then, that aforesaid armor, probity
He figures in, is falsehood scale on scale ;
Honor and faith, — a lie and a disguise,
Probably for all livers in this world,
Certainly for himself ! All say good words
To who will hear, all do thereby bad deeds
To who must undergo ; so thrive mankind !
See this habitual creed exemplified
Most in the last deliberate act ; as last,
So, very sum and substance of the soul
Of him that planned and leaves one perfect piece,
The sin brought under jurisdiction now,
Even the marriage of the man : this act
I sever from his life as sample, show
For Guido's self, intend to test him by,
As, from a cup filled fairly at the fount,
By the components we decide enough
Or to let flow as late, or stanch the source.

He purposes this marriage, I remark,
On no one motive that should prompt thereto —

Farthest, by consequence, from ends alleged
Appropriate to the action ; so they were :
The best, he knew and feigned, the worst he took.
Not one permissible impulse moves the man,
From the mere liking of the eye and ear,
To the true longing of the heart that loves,
No trace of these : but all to instigate,
Is what sinks man past level of the brute
Whose appetite if brutish is a truth.
All is the lust for money : to get gold, —
Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder ! Make
Body and soul wring gold out, lured within
The clutch of hate by love, the trap's pretence !
What good else get from bodies and from souls ?
This got, there were some life to lead thereby,
— What, where or how, appreciate those who tell
How the toad lives : it lives, — enough for me !
To get this good, — with but a groan or so,
Then, silence of the victims, — were the feat.
He foresaw, made a picture in his mind, —
Of father and mother stunned and echoless
To the blow, as they lie staring at fate's jaws
Their folly danced into, till the woe fell ;
Edged in a month by strenuous cruelty
From even the poor nook whence they watched the wolf
Feast on their heart, the lamb-like child his prey ;
Plundered to the last remnant of their wealth,
(What daily pittance pleased the plunderer dole)
Hunted forth to go hide head, starve and die,
And leave the pale awe-stricken wife, past hope
Of help i' the world now, mute and motionless,
His slave, his chattel, to first use, then destroy.
All this, he bent mind how to bring about,
Put plain in act and life, as painted plain,

So have success, reach crown of earthly good,
In this particular enterprise of man,
By marriage — undertaken in God's face
With all these lies so opposite God's truth,
For end so other than man's end.

Thus schemes
Guido, and thus would carry out his scheme:
But when an obstacle first blocks the path,
When he finds none may boast monopoly
Of lies and trick i' the tricking lying world, —
That sorry timid natures, even this sort
O' the Comparini, want nor trick nor lie
Proper to the kind, — that as the gor-crow treats
The bramble-finch so treats the finch the moth,
And the great Guido is minutely matched
By this same couple, — whether true or false
The revelation of Pompilia's birth,
Which in a moment brings his scheme to naught, —
Then, he is piqued, advances yet a stage,
Leaves the low region to the finch and fly,
Soars to the zenith whence the fiercer fowl
May dare the inimitable swoop. I see.
He draws now on the curious crime, the fine
Felicity and flower of wickedness;
Determines, by the utmost exercise
Of violence, made safe and sure by craft,
To satiate malice, pluck one last arch-pang
From the parents, else would triumph out of reach,
By punishing their child, within reach yet,
Who, by thought, word or deed, could nowise wrong
I' the matter that now moves him. So plans he,
Always subordinating (note the point!)
Revenge, the manlier sin, to interest

The meaner, — would pluck pang forth, but unclench
No gripe in the act, let fall no money-piece.
Hence a plan for so plaguing, body and soul,
His wife, so putting, day by day, hour by hour,
The untried torture to the untouched place,
As must precipitate an end foreseen,
Goad her into some plain revolt, most like
Plunge upon patent suicidal shame,
Death to herself, damnation by rebound
To those whose hearts he, holding hers, holds still:
Such plan as, in its bad completeness, shall
Ruin the three together and alike,
Yet leave himself in luck and liberty,
No claim renounced, no right a forfeiture,
His person unendangered, his good fame
Without a flaw, his pristine worth intact, —
While they, with all their claims and rights that cling,
Shall forthwith crumble off him every side,
Scorched into dust, a plaything for the winds.
As when, in our Campagna, there is fired
The nest-like work that overruns a hut;
And, as the thatch burns here, there, everywhere,
Even to the ivy and wild vine, that bound
And blessed the home where men were happy once,
There rises gradual, black amid the blaze,
Some grim and unscathed nucleus of the nest, —
Some old malicious tower, some obscene tomb
They thought a temple in their ignorance,
And clung about and thought to lean upon —
There laughs it o'er their ravage, — where are they?
So did his cruelty burn life about,
And lay the ruin bare in dreadfulness,
Try the persistency of torment so
Upon the wife, that, at extremity,

Some crisis brought about by fire and flame,
The patient frenzy-stung must needs break loose,
Fly anyhow, find refuge anywhere,
Even in the arms of who should front her first,
No monster but a man — while nature shrieked
"Or thus escape, or die!" The spasm arrived,
Not the escape by way of sin, — O God,
Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest, from Thy hand?
Therefore she lay resigned to die, — so far
The simple cruelty was foiled. Why then,
Craft to the rescue, let craft supplement
Cruelty and show hell a masterpiece!
Hence this consummate lie, this love-intrigue,
Unmanly simulation of a sin,
With place and time and circumstance to suit —
These letters false beyond all forgery —
Not just handwriting and mere authorship,
But false to body and soul they figure forth —
As though the man had cut out shape and shape
From fancies of that other Aretine,
To paste below — incorporate the filth
With cherub faces on a missal-page!

Whereby the man so far attains his end
That strange temptation is permitted, — see!
Pompilia wife, and Caponsacchi priest,
Are brought together as nor priest nor wife
Should stand, and there is passion in the place,
Power in the air for evil as for good,
Promptings from heaven and hell, as if the stars
Fought in their courses for a fate to be.
Thus stand the wife and priest, a spectacle,
I doubt not, to unseen assemblage there.
No lamp will mark that window for a shrine,

No tablet signalize the terrace, teach
New generations which succeed the old,
The pavement of the street is holy ground ;
No bard describe in verse how Christ prevailed
And Satan fell like lightning ! Why repine ?
What does the world, told truth, but lie the more ?

A second time the plot is foiled ; nor, now,
By corresponding sin for countercheck,
No wile and trick that baffle trick and wile, —
The play o' the parents ! here the blot is blanched
By God's gift of a purity of soul
That will not take pollution, ermine-like
Armed from dishonor by its own soft snow.
Such was this gift of God who showed for once
How He would have the world go white : it seems
As a new attribute were born of each
Champion of truth, the priest and wife I praise, —
As a new safeguard sprang up in defence
Of their new noble nature : so a thorn
Comes to the aid of and completes the rose —
Courage, to-wit, no woman's gift nor priest's,
I' the crisis ; might leaps vindicating right.
See how the strong aggressor, bad and bold,
With every vantage, preconcerts surprise,
Leaps of a sudden at his victim's throat
In a byeway, — how fares he when face to face
With Caponsacchi ? Who fights, who fears now ?
There quails Count Guido, armed to the chattering teeth,
Cowers at the steadfast eye and quiet word
O' the Canon of the Pieve ! There skulks crime
Behind law called in to back cowardice !
While out of the poor trampled worm the wife,
Springs up a serpent !

But anon of these.
Him I judge now, — of him proceed to note,
Failing the first, a second chance befriends
Guido, gives pause ere punishment arrive.
The law he called, comes, hears, adjudicates,
Nor does amiss i' the main, — secludes the wife
From the husband, respites the oppressed one, grants
Probation to the oppressor, could he know
The mercy of a minute's fiery purge !
The furnace-coals alike of public scorn,
Private remorse, heaped glowing on his head,
What if, — the force and guile, the ore's alloy,
Eliminate, his baser soul refined —
The lost be saved even yet, so as by fire ?
Let him, rebuked, go softly all his days
And, when no graver musings claim their due,
Meditate on a man's immense mistake
Who, fashioned to use feet and walk, deigns crawl —
Takes the unmanly means — ay, though to ends
Man scarce should make for, would but reach thro' wrong, —
May sin, but nowise needs shame manhood so :
Since fowlers hawk, shoot, nay and snare the game,
And yet eschew vile practice, nor find sport
In torch-light treachery or the luring owl.

But how hunts Guido ? Why, the fraudful trap —
Late spurned to ruin by the indignant feet
Of fellows in the chase who loved fair play —
Here he picks up the fragments to the least,
Lades him and hies to the old lurking-place
Where haply he may patch again, refit
The mischief, file its blunted teeth anew,
Make sure, next time, first snap shall break the bone.

Craft, greed and violence complot revenge:
Craft, for its quota, schemes to bring about
And seize occasion and be safe withal:
Greed craves its act may work both far and near,
Crush the tree, branch and trunk and root, beside.
Whichever twig or leaf arrests a streak
Of possible sunshine else would coin itself,
And drop down one more gold piece in the path:
Violence stipulates "Advantage proved,
And safety sure, be pain the overplus!
Murder with jagged knife! Cut but tear too!
Foiled oft, starved long, glut malice for amends!"
And what, craft's scheme? scheme sorrowful and strange
As though the elements, whom mercy checked,
Had mustered hate for one eruption more,
One final deluge to surprise the Ark
Cradled and sleeping on its mountain-top:
Their outbreak-signal — what but the dove's coo,
Back with the olive in her bill for news
Sorrow was over? 'T is an infant's birth,
Guido's first born, his son and heir, that gives
The occasion: other men cut free their souls
From care in such a case, fly up in thanks
To God, reach, recognize His love for once:
Guido cries "Soul, at last the mire is thine!
Lie there in likeness of a money-bag
My babe's birth so pins down past moving now,
That I dare cut adrift the lives I late
Scrupled to touch lest thou escape with them!
These parents and their child my wife, — touch one,
Lose all! Their rights determined on a head
I could but hate, not harm, since from each hair
Dangled a hope for me: now — chance and change!

No right was in their child but passes plain
To that child's child and through such child to me.
I am a father now, — come what, come will,
I represent my child; he comes between —
Cuts sudden off the sunshine of this life
From those three: why, the gold is in his curls!
Not with old Pietro's, Violante's head,
Not his gray horror, her more hideous black — 770
Go these, devoted to the knife!"
'T is done:
Wherefore should mind misgive, heart hesitate?
He calls to counsel, fashions certain four
Colorless natures counted clean till now,
— Rustic simplicity, uncorrupted youth,
Ignorant virtue! Here 's the gold o' the prime
When Saturn ruled, shall shock our leaden day —
The clown abash the courtier! Mark it, bards!
The courtier tries his hand on clownship here,
Speaks a word, names a crime, appoints a price, — 780
Just breathes on what, suffused with all himself,
Is red-hot henceforth past distinction now
I' the common glow of hell. And thus they break
And blaze on us at Rome, Christ's birthnight-eve!
Oh angels that sang erst "On the earth, peace!
To man, good will!" — such peace finds earth to-day!
After the seventeen hundred years, so man
Wills good to man, so Guido makes complete
His murder! what is it I said? — cuts loose
Three lives that hitherto he suffered cling, 790
Simply because each served to nail secure,
By a corner of the money-bag, his soul, —
Therefore, lives sacred till the babe's first breath
O'erweights them in the balance, — off they fly!

So is the murder managed, sin conceived
To the full: and why not crowned with triumph too?
Why must the sin, conceived thus, bring forth death?
I note how, within hair's-breadth of escape,
Impunity and the thing supposed success,
Guido is found when the check comes, the change,
The monitory touch o' the tether — felt
By few, not marked by many, named by none
At the moment, only recognized aright
I' the fulness of the days, for God's, lest sin
Exceed the service, leap the line: such check —
A secret which this life finds hard to keep,
And, often guessed, is never quite revealed —
Needs must trip Guido on a stumbling-block
Too vulgar, too absurdly plain i' the path!
Study this single oversight of care,
This hebetude that marred sagacity,
Forgetfulness of all the man best knew, —
How any stranger having need to fly,
Needs but to ask and have the means of flight.
Why, the first urchin tells you, to leave Rome,
Get horses, you must show the warrant, just
The banal scrap, clerk's scribble, a fair word buys,
Or foul one, if a ducat sweeten word, —
And straight authority will back demand,
Give you the pick o' the post-house! — how should he,
Then, resident at Rome for thirty years,
Guido, instruct a stranger! And himself
Forgets just this poor paper scrap, wherewith
Armed, every door he knocks at opens wide
To save him: horsed and manned, with such advance
O' the hunt behind, why, 't were the easy task
Of hours told on the fingers of one hand,
To reach the Tuscan frontier, laugh at home,

Light-hearted with his fellows of the place, —
Prepared by that strange shameful judgment, that
Satire upon a sentence just pronounced
By the Rota and confirmed by the Granduke, —
Ready in a circle to receive their peer,
Appreciate his good story how, when Rome,
The Pope-King and the populace of priests
Made common cause with their confederate
The other priestling who seduced his wife,
He, all unaided, wiped out the affront
With decent bloodshed and could face his friends,
Frolic it in the world's eye. Ay, such tale
Missed such applause, and by such oversight!
So, tired and footsore, those blood-flustered five
Went reeling on the road through dark and cold,
The few permissible miles, to sink at length,
Wallow and sleep in the first wayside straw,
As the other herd quenched, i' the wash o' the wave,
— Each swine, the devil inside him: so slept they,
And so were caught and caged — all through one trip,
One touch of fool in Guido the astute!
He curses the omission, I surmise,
More than the murder. Why, thou fool and blind,
It is the mercy-stroke that stops thy fate,
Hamstrings and holds thee to thy hurt, — but how?
On the edge o' the precipice! One minute more,
Thou hadst gone farther and fared worse, my son,
Fathoms down on the flint and fire beneath!
Thy comrades each and all were of one mind,
Thy murder done, to straightway murder thee
In turn, because of promised pay withheld.
So, to the last, greed found itself at odds
With craft in thee, and, proving conqueror,
Had sent thee, the same night that crowned thy hope,

Thither where, this same day, I see thee not,
Nor, through God's mercy, need, to-morrow, see.

Such I find Guido, midmost blotch of black
Discernible in this group of clustered crimes
Huddling together in the cave they call
Their palace outraged day thus penetrates.
Around him ranged, now close and now remote,
Prominent or obscure to meet the needs
O' the mage and master, I detect each shape
Subsidiary i' the scene nor loathed the less,
All alike colored, all descried akin
By one and the same pitchy furnace stirred
At the centre : see, they lick the master's hand, —
This fox-faced horrible priest, this brother-brute
The Abate, — why, mere wolfishness looks well,
Guido stands honest in the red o' the flame,
Beside this yellow that would pass for white,
Twice Guido, all craft but no violence,
This copier of the mien and gait and garb
Of Peter and Paul, that he may go disguised,
Rob halt and lame, sick folk i' the temple-porch !
Armed with religion, fortified by law,
A man of peace, who trims the midnight lamp
And turns the classic page — and all for craft,
All to work harm with, yet incur no scratch !
While Guido brings the struggle to a close,
Paul steps back the due distance, clear o' the trap
He builds and baits. Guido I catch and judge ;
Paul is past reach in this world and my time :
This is a case reserved. Pass to the next,
The boy of the brood, the young Girolamo
Priest, Canon, and what more ? nor wolf nor fox,
But hybrid, neither craft nor violence

Wholly, part violence part craft : such cross
Tempts speculation — will both blend one day,
And prove hell's better product ? Or subside
And let the simple quality emerge,
Go on with Satan's service the old way ?
Meanwhile, what promise, — what performance too !
For there 's a new distinctive touch, I see,
Lust — lacking in the two — hell's own blue tint
That gives a character and marks the man
More than a match for yellow and red. Once more,
A case reserved : why should I doubt ? Then comes
The gaunt gray nightmare in the furthest smoke,
The hag that gave these three abortions birth,
Unmotherly mother and unwomanly
Woman, that near turns motherhood to shame,
Womanliness to loathing : no one word,
No gesture to curb cruelty a whit
More than the she-pard thwarts her playsome whelps
Trying their milk-teeth on the soft o' the throat
O' the first fawn, flung, with those beseeching eyes,
Flat in the covert ! How should she but couch,
Lick the dry lips, unsheath the blunted claw,
Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at what chance
Old bloody half-forgotten dream may flit,
Born when herself was novice to the taste,
The while she lets youth take its pleasure. Last,
These God-abandoned wretched lumps of life,
These four companions, — country-folk this time,
Not tainted by the unwholesome civic breath,
Much less the curse o' the Court ! Mere striplings too,
Fit to do human nature justice still !
Surely when impudence in Guido's shape
Shall propose crime and proffer money's-worth
To these stout tall rough bright-eyed, black-haired boys,

The blood shall bound in answer to each cheek
Before the indignant outcry break from lip !
Are these i' the mood to murder, hardly loosed
From healthy autumn-finish of ploughed glebe,
Grapes in the barrel, work at happy end,
And winter near with rest and Christmas play ?
How greet they Guido with his final task —
(As if he but proposed " One vineyard more
To dig, ere frost come, then relax indeed ! ")
" Anywhere, anyhow and anywhy,
Murder me some three people, old and young,
Ye never heard the names of, — and be paid
So much ! " And the whole four accede at once.
Demur ? Do cattle bidden march or halt ?
Is it some lingering habit, old fond faith
I' the lord o' the land, instructs them, — birthright badge
Of feudal tenure claims its slaves again ?
Not so at all, thou noble human heart !
All is done purely for the pay, — which, earned,
And not forthcoming at the instant, makes
Religion heresy, and the lord o' the land
Fit subject for a murder in his turn.
The patron with cut throat and rifled purse,
Deposited i' the roadside-ditch, his due,
Naught hinders each good fellow trudging home,
The heavier by a piece or two in poke,
And so with new zest to the common life,
Mattock and spade, plough-tail and wagon-shaft,
Till some such other piece of luck betide,
Who knows ? Since this is a mere start in life,
And none of them exceeds the twentieth year.
Nay, more i' the background yet ? Unnoticed forms
Claim to be classed, subordinately vile ?

Complacent lookers-on that laugh, — perchance
Shake head as their friend's horse-play grows too rough
With the mere child he manages amiss —
But would not interfere and make bad worse
For twice the fractious tears and prayers: thou know'st
Civility better, Marzi-Medici,
Governor for thy kinsman the Granduke!
Fit representative of law, man's lamp
I' the magistrate's grasp full-flare, no rushlight-end
Sputtering 'twixt thumb and finger of the priest!
Whose answer to the couple's cry for help
Is a threat, — whose remedy of Pompilia's wrong,
A shrug o' the shoulder, and facetious word
Or wink, traditional with Tuscan wits,
To Guido in the doorway. Laud to law!
The wife is pushed back to the husband, he
Who knows how these home-squabblings persecute
People who have the public good to mind,
And work best with a silence in the court!

Ah, but I save my word at least for thee,
Archbishop, who art under, i' the Church,
As I am under God, — thou, chosen by both
To do the shepherd's office, feed the sheep —
How of this lamb that panted at thy foot
While the wolf pressed on her within crook's reach?
Wast thou the hireling that did turn and flee?
With thee at least anon the little word!

Such denizens o' the cave now cluster round
And heat the furnace sevenfold: time indeed
A bolt from heaven should cleave roof and clear place,
Transfix and show the world, suspiring flame,
The main offender, scar and brand the rest
Hurrying, each miscreant to his hole: then flood

And purify the scene with outside day —
Which yet, in the absolutest drench of dark,
Ne'er wants a witness, some stray beauty-beam
To the despair of hell.

First of the first,
Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as now
Perfect in whiteness: stoop thou down, my child,
Give one good moment to the poor old Pope
Heart-sick at having all his world to blame —
Let me look at thee in the flesh as erst,
Let me enjoy the old clean linen garb,
Not the new splendid vesture! Armed and crowned,
Would Michael, yonder, be, nor crowned nor armed,
The less pre-eminent angel? Everywhere
I see in the world the intellect of man,
That sword, the energy his subtle spear,
The knowledge which defends him like a shield —
Everywhere; but they make not up, I think,
The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's flower
She holds up to the softened gaze of God!
It was not given Pompilia to know much,
Speak much, to write a book, to move mankind,
Be memorized by who records my time.
Yet if in purity and patience, if
In faith held fast despite the plucking fiend,
Safe like the signet stone with the new name
That saints are known by, — if in right returned
For wrong, most pardon for worst injury,
If there be any virtue, any praise, —
Then will this woman-child have proved — who knows? —
Just the one prize vouchsafed unworthy me,
Seven years a gardener of the untoward ground,

I till, — this earth, my sweat and blood manure
All the long day that barrenly grows dusk :
At least one blossom makes me proud at eve
Born 'mid the briers of my enclosure ! Still
(Oh, here as elsewhere, nothingness of man !)
Those be the plants, imbedded yonder South
To mellow in the morning, those made fat
By the master's eye, that yield such timid leaf,
Uncertain bud, as product of his pains !
While — see how this mere chance-sown, cleft-nursed seed,
That sprang up by the wayside 'neath the foot
Of the enemy, this breaks all into blaze,
Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
To incorporate the whole great sun it loves
From the inch-height whence it looks and longs ! My flower,
My rose, I gather for the breast of God,
This I praise most in thee, where all I praise,
That having been obedient to the end
According to the light allotted, law
Prescribed thy life, still tried, still standing test, —
Dutiful to the foolish parents first,
Submissive next to the bad husband, — nay,
Tolerant of those meaner miserable
That did his hests, eked out the dole of pain, —
Thou, patient thus, couldst rise from law to law,
The old to the new, promoted at one cry
O' the trump of God to the new service, not
To longer bear, but henceforth fight, be found
Sublime in new impatience with the foe !
Endure man and obey God : plant firm foot
On neck of man, tread man into the hell
Meet for him, and obey God all the more !

Oh child that didst despise thy life so much
When it seemed only thine to keep or lose,
How the fine ear felt fall the first low word
"Value life, and preserve life for My sake!"
Thou didst . . . how shall I say? . . . receive so long
The standing ordinance of God on earth,
What wonder if the novel claim had clashed
With old requirement, seemed to supersede
Too much the customary law? But, brave,
Thou at first prompting of what I call God,
And fools call Nature, didst hear, comprehend,
Accept the obligation laid on thee,
Mother elect, to save the unborn child,
As brute and bird do, reptile and the fly,
Ay and, I nothing doubt, even tree, shrub, plant
And flower o' the field, all in a common pact
To worthily defend the trust of trusts,
Life from the Ever Living: — didst resist —
Anticipate the office that is mine —
And with his own sword stay the upraised arm,
The endeavor of the wicked, and defend
Him who, — again in my default, — was there
For visible providence: one less true than thou
To touch, i' the past, less practised in the right,
Approved less far in all docility
To all instruction, — how had such an one
Made scruple "Is this motion a decree?"
It was authentic to the experienced ear
O' the good and faithful servant. Go past me
And get thy praise, — and be not far to seek
Presently when I follow if I may!

And surely not so very much apart
Need I place thee, my warrior-priest, — in whom

What if I gain the other rose, the gold,
We grave to imitate God's miracle,
Greet monarchs with, good rose in its degree?
Irregular noble 'scapegrace — son the same!
Faulty — and peradventure ours the fault
Who still misteach, mislead, throw hook and line,
Thinking to land leviathan forsooth,
Tame the scaled neck, play with him as a bird,
And bind him for our maidens! Better bear
The King of Pride go wantoning awhile,
Unplagued by cord in nose and thorn in jaw,
Through deep to deep, followed by all that shine,
Churning the blackness hoary: He who made
The comely terror, He shall make the sword
To match that piece of netherstone his heart,
Ay, nor miss praise thereby; who else shut fire
I' the stone, to leap from mouth at sword's first stroke,
In lamps of love and faith, the chivalry
That dares the right and disregards alike
The yea and nay o' the world? Self-sacrifice, —
What if an idol took it? Ask the Church
Why she was wont to turn each Venus here, —
Poor Rome perversely lingered round, despite
Instruction, for the sake of purblind love, —
Into Madonna's shape, and waste no whit
Of aught so rare on earth as gratitude!
All this sweet savor was not ours but thine,
Nard of the rock, a natural wealth we name
Incense, and treasure up as food for saints,
When flung to us — whose function was to give
Not find the costly perfume. Do I smile?
Nay, Caponsacchi, much I find amiss,
Blameworthy, punishable in this freak
Of thine, this youth prolonged, though age was ripe,

This masquerade in sober day, with change
Of motley too, — now hypocrite's disguise,
Now fool's-costume: which lie was least like truth,
Which the ungainlier, more discordant garb
With that symmetric soul inside my son,
The churchman's or the worldling's, — let him judge,
Our adversary who enjoys the task!
I rather chronicle the healthy rage, —
When the first moan broke from the martyr-maid
At that uncaging of the beasts, — made bare
My athlete on the instant, gave such good
Great undisguised leap over post and pale
Right into the mid-cirque, free fighting-place.
There may have been rash stripping — every rag
Went to the winds, — infringement manifold
Of laws prescribed pudicity, I fear,
In this impulsive and prompt self-display!
Ever such tax comes of the foolish youth;
Men mulct the wiser manhood, and suspect
No veritable star swims out of cloud.
Bear thou such imputation, undergo
The penalty I nowise dare relax, —
Conventional chastisement and rebuke.
But for the outcome, the brave starry birth
Conciliating earth with all that cloud,
Thank heaven as I do! Ay, such championship
Of God at first blush, such prompt cheery thud
Of glove on ground that answers ringingly
The challenge of the false knight, — watch we l ng
And wait we vainly for its gallant like
From those appointed to the service, sworn
His body-guard with pay and privilege —
White-cinct, because in white walks sanctity,
Red-socked, how else proclaim fine scorn of flesh,

Unchariness of blood when blood faith begs!
Where are the men-at-arms with cross on coat?
Aloof, bewraying their attire: whilst thou
In mask and motley, pledged to dance not fight,
Sprang'st forth the hero! In thought, word and deed,
How throughout all thy warfare thou wast pure,
I find it easy to believe: and if
At any fateful moment of the strange
Adventure, the strong passion of that strait,
Fear and surprise, may have revealed too much, —
As when a thundrous midnight, with black air
That burns, rain-drops that blister, breaks a spell,
Draws out the excessive virtue of some sheathed
Shut unsuspected flower that hoards and hides
Immensity of sweetness, — so, perchance,
Might the surprise and fear release too much
The perfect beauty of the body and soul
Thou savedst in thy passion for God's sake,
He who is Pity. Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph? Pray
"Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"
Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,
That so he may do battle and have praise!
Do I not see the praise? — that while thy mates
Bound to deserve i' the matter, prove at need
Unprofitable through the very pains
We gave to train them well and start them fair, —
Are found too stiff, with standing ranked and ranged,
For onset in good earnest, too obtuse

Of ear, through iteration of command,
For catching quick the sense of the real cry, —
Thou, whose sword-hand was used to strike the lute,
Whose sentry-station graced some wanton's gate,
Thou didst push forward and show mettle, shame
The laggards, and retrieve the day. Well done!
Be glad thou hast let light into the world
Through that irregular breach o' the boundary, — see
The same upon thy path and march assured,
Learning anew the use of soldiership,
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
Loyalty to the life's end! Ruminate,
Deserve the initiatory spasm, — once more
Work, be unhappy but bear life, my son!

And troop you, somewhere 'twixt the best and worst,
Where crowd the indifferent product, all too poor
Makeshift, starved samples of humanity!
Father and mother, huddle there and hide!
A gracious eye may find you! Foul and fair,
Sadly mixed natures: self-indulgent, — yet
Self-sacrificing too: how the love soars,
How the craft, avarice, vanity and spite
Sink again! So they keep the middle course,
Slide into silly crime at unaware,
Slip back upon the stupid virtue, stay
Nowhere enough for being classed, I hope
And fear. Accept the swift and rueful death,
Taught, somewhat sternlier than is wont, what waits
The ambiguous creature, — how the one black tuft
Steadies the aim of the arrow just as well
As the wide faultless white on the bird's breast!
Nay, you were punished in the very part
That looked most pure of speck, — 't was honest love

Betrayed you, — did love seem most worthy pains,
Challenge such purging, since ordained survive
When all the rest of you was done with? Go!
Never again elude the choice of tints!
White shall not neutralize the black, nor good
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:
Life's business being just the terrible choice.

So do I see, pronounce on all and some
Grouped for my judgment now, — profess no doubt
While I pronounce: dark, difficult enough
The human sphere, yet eyes grow sharp by use,
I find the truth, dispart the shine from shade,
As a mere man may, with no special touch
O' the lynx-gift in each ordinary orb:
Nay, if the popular notion class me right,
One of well-nigh decayed intelligence, —
What of that? Through hard labor and good will,
And habitude that gives a blind man sight
At the practised finger-ends of him, I do
Discern, and dare decree in consequence,
Whatever prove the peril of mistake.
Whence, then, this quite new quick cold thrill, — cloudlike,
This keen dread creeping from a quarter scarce
Suspected in the skies I nightly scan?
What slacks the tense nerve, saps the wound-up spring
Of the act that should and shall be, sends the mount
And mass o' the whole man's-strength, — conglobed so late —
Shudderingly into dust, a moment's work?
While I stand firm, go fearless, in this world,
For this life recognize and arbitrate,
Touch and let stay, or else remove a thing,

Judge "This is right, this object out of place,"
Candle in hand that helps me and to spare, —
What if a voice deride me, "Perk and pry!
Brighten each nook with thine intelligence!
Play the good householder, ply man and maid
With tasks prolonged into the midnight, test
Their work and nowise stint of the due wage
Each worthy worker: but with gyves and whip
Pay thou misprision of a single point
Plain to thy happy self who lift'st the light,
Lament'st the darkling, — bold to all beneath!
What if thyself adventure, now the place
Is purged so well? Leave pavement and mount roof,
Look round thee for the light of the upper sky,
The fire which lit thy fire which finds default
In Guido Franceschini to his cost!
What if, above in the domain of light,
Thou miss the accustomed signs, remark eclipse?
Shalt thou still gaze on ground nor lift a lid, —
Steady in thy superb prerogative,
Thy inch of inkling, — nor once face the doubt
I' the sphere above thee, darkness to be felt?"

Yet my poor spark had for its source, the sun;
Thither I sent the great looks which compel
Light from its fount: all that I do and am
Comes from the truth, or seen or else surmised,
Remembered or divined, as mere man may:
I know just so, nor otherwise. As I know,
I speak, — what should I know, then, and how speak
Were there a wild mistake of eye or brain
As to recorded governance above?
If my own breath, only, blew coal alight
I styled celestial and the morning-star?

I, who in this world act resolvedly,
Dispose of men, their bodies and their souls,
As they acknowledge or gainsay the light
I show them, — shall I too lack courage? — leave
I, too, the post of me, like those I blame?
Refuse, with kindred inconsistency,
To grapple danger whereby souls grow strong?
I am near the end; but still not at the end;
All to the very end is trial in life:
At this stage is the trial of my soul
Danger to face, or danger to refuse?
Shall I dare try the doubt now, or not dare?

O Thou, — as represented here to me
In such conception as my soul allows, —
Under Thy measureless, my atom width! —
Man's mind, what is it but a convex glass
Wherein are gathered all the scattered points
Picked out of the immensity of sky,
To re-unite there, be our heaven for earth,
Our known unknown, our God revealed to man?
Existent somewhere, somehow, as a whole;
Here, as a whole proportioned to our sense, —
There, (which is nowhere, speech must babble thus!)
In the absolute immensity, the whole
Appreciable solely by Thyself, —
Here, by the little mind of man, reduced
To littleness that suits his faculty,
In the degree appreciable too;
Between Thee and ourselves — nay even, again,
Below us, to the extreme of the minute,
Appreciable by how many and what diverse
Modes of the life Thou madest be! (why live
Except for love, — how love unless they know?)

Each of them, only filling to the edge,
Insect or angel, his just length and breadth,
Due facet of reflection, — full, no less,
Angel or insect, as Thou framedst things.
I it is who have been appointed here
To represent Thee, in my turn, on earth,
Just as, if new philosophy know aught,
This one earth, out of all the multitude
Of peopled worlds, as stars are now supposed, —
Was chosen, and no sun-star of the swarm,
For stage and scene of Thy transcendent act
Beside which even the creation fades
Into a puny exercise of power.
Choice of the world, choice of the thing I am,
Both emanate alike from Thy dread play
Of operation outside this our sphere
Where things are classed and counted small or great, —
Incomprehensibly the choice is Thine!
I therefore bow my head and take Thy place.
There is, beside the works, a tale of Thee
In the world's mouth, which I find credible:
I love it with my heart: unsatisfied,
I try it with my reason, nor discept
From any point I probe and pronounce sound.
Mind is not matter nor from matter, but
Above, — leave matter then, proceed with mind!
Man's be the mind recognized at the height, —
Leave the inferior minds and look at man!
Is he the strong, intelligent and good
Up to his own conceivable height? Nowise.
Enough o' the low, — soar the conceivable height,
Find cause to match the effect in evidence,
The work i' the world, not man's but God's; leave man!

Conjecture of the worker by the work:
Is there strength there? — enough: intelligence?
Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
Not to the human eye in the present state,
An isosceles deficient in the base.
What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit? So is strength,
So is intelligence; let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
Then is the tale true and God shows complete.
Beyond the tale, I reach into the dark,
Feel what I cannot see, and still faith stands:
I can believe this dread machinery
Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,
Devised, — all pain, at most expenditure
Of pain by Who devised pain, — to evolve,
By new machinery in counterpart,
The moral qualities of man — how else? —
To make him love in turn and be beloved,
Creative and self-sacrificing too,
And thus eventually God-like, (ay,
"I have said ye are Gods," — shall it be said for naught?)
Enable man to wring, from out all pain,
All pleasure for a common heritage
To all eternity: this may be surmised,
The other is revealed, — whether a fact,
Absolute, abstract, independent truth,
Historic, not reduced to suit man's mind, —
Or only truth reverberate, changed, made pass
A spectrum into mind, the narrow eye, —
The same and not the same, else unconceived —
Though quite conceivable to the next grade

Above it in intelligence, — as truth
Easy to man were blindness to the beast
By parity of procedure, — the same truth
In a new form, but changed in either case :
What matter so intelligence be filled ?
To a child, the sea is angry, for it roars :
Frost bites, else why the tooth-like fret on face ?
Man makes acoustics deal with the sea's wrath,
Explains the choppy cheek by chymic law, —
To man and child remains the same effect
On drum of ear and root of nose, change cause
Never so thoroughly : so my heart be struck,
What care I, — by God's gloved hand or the bare ?
Nor do I much perplex me with aught hard,
Dubious in the transmitting of the tale, —
No, nor with certain riddles set to solve.
This life is training and a passage ; pass, —
Still, we march over some flat obstacle
We made give way before us ; solid truth
In front of it, what motion for the world ?
The moral sense grows but by exercise.
'T is even as man grew probatively
Initiated in Godship, set to make
A fairer moral world than this he finds,
Guess now what shall be known hereafter. Deal
Thus with the present problem : as we see,
A faultless creature is destroyed, and sin
Has had its way i' the world where God should rule.
Ay, but for this irrelevant circumstance
Of inquisition after blood, we see
Pompilia lost and Guido saved : how long ?
For his whole life : how much is that whole life ?
We are not babes, but know the minute's worth,
And feel that life is large and the world small,

So, wait till life have passed from out the world.
Neither does this astonish at the end,
That whereas I can so receive and trust,
Other men, made with hearts and souls the same,
Reject and disbelieve, — subordinate
The future to the present, — sin, nor fear.
This I refer still to the foremost fact,
Life is probation and the earth no goal
But starting-point of man: compel him strive,
Which means, in man, as good as reach the goal, —
Why institute that race, his life, at all?
But this does overwhelm me with surprise,
Touch me to terror, — not that faith, the pearl,
Should be let lie by fishers wanting food, —
Nor, seen and handled by a certain few
Critical and contemptuous, straight consigned
To shore and shingle for the pebble it proves, —
But that, when haply found and known and named
By the residue made rich for evermore,
These, — that these favored ones, should in a trice
Turn, and with double zest go dredge for whelks,
Mud-worms that make the savory soup! Enough
O' the disbelievers, see the faithful few!
How do the Christians here deport them, keep
Their robes of white unspotted by the world?
What is this Aretine Archbishop, this
Man under me as I am under God,
This champion of the faith, I armed and decked,
Pushed forward, put upon a pinnacle,
To show the enemy his victor, — see!
What 's the best fighting when the couple close?
Pompilia cries, "Protect me from the wolf!"
He — "No, thy Guido is rough, heady, strong,
Dangerous to disquiet: let him bide!

He needs some bone to mumble, help amuse
The darkness of his den with : so, the fawn
Which limps up bleeding to my foot and lies,
— Come to me, daughter ! — thus I throw him back ! "
Have we misjudged here, over-armed our knight,
Given gold and silk where plain hard steel serves best,
Enfeebled whom we sought to fortify,
Made an archbishop and undone a saint ?
Well, then, descend these heights, this pride of life,
Sit in the ashes with a barefoot monk
Who long ago stamped out the worldly sparks,
By fasting, watching, stone cell and wire scourge,
— No such indulgence as unknits the strength —
These breed the tight nerve and tough cuticle,
And the world's praise or blame runs rillet-wise
Off the broad back and brawny breast, we know !
He meets the first cold sprinkle of the world,
And shudders to the marrow. " Save this child ?
Oh, my superiors, oh, the Archbishop's self !
Who was it dared lay hand upon the ark
His betters saw fall nor put finger forth ?
Great ones could help yet help not : why should small ?
I break my promise : let her break her heart ! "
These are the Christians not the worldlings, not
The sceptics, who thus battle for the faith !
If foolish virgins disobey and sleep,
What wonder ? But, this time, the wise that watch,
Sell lamps and buy lutes, exchange oil for wine,
The mystic Spouse betrays the Bridegroom here.
To our last resource, then ! Since all flesh is weak,
Bind weaknesses together, we get strength :
The individual weighed, found wanting, try
Some institution, honest artifice
Whereby the units grow compact and firm !

Each props the other, and so stand is made
By our embodied cowards that grow brave.
The Monastery called of Convertites,
Meant to help women because these helped Christ, —
A thing existent only while it acts,
Does as designed, else a nonentity, —
For what is an idea unrealized? —
Pompilia is consigned to these for help.
They do help: they are prompt to testify
To her pure life and saintly dying days.
She dies, and lo, who seemed so poor, proves rich.
What does the body that lives through helpfulness
To women for Christ's sake? The kiss turns bite,
The dove's note changes to the crow's cry: judge!
"Seeing that this our Convent claims of right
What goods belong to those we succor, be
The same proved women of dishonest life, —
And seeing that this Trial made appear
Pompilia was in such predicament, —
The Convent hereupon pretends to said
Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,
And takes possession by the Fisc's advice."
Such is their attestation to the cause
Of Christ, who had one saint at least, they hoped:
But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse
To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat?
Christ must give up his gains then! They unsay
All the fine speeches, — who was saint is whore.
Why, scripture yields no parallel for this!
The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's coat;
We want another legend of the Twelve
Disputing if it was Christ's coat at all,
Claiming as prize the woof of price — for why?
The Master was a thief, purloined the same,

Or paid for it out of the common bag!
Can it be this is end and outcome, all
I take with me to show as stewardship's fruit,
The best yield of the latest time, this year
The seventeen-hundredth since God died for man?
Is such effect proportionate to cause?
And still the terror keeps on the increase
When I perceive . . . how can I blink the fact?
That the fault, the obduracy to good,
Lies not with the impracticable stuff
Whence man is made, his very nature's fault,
As if it were of ice the moon may gild
Not melt, or stone 't was meant the sun should warm
Not make bear flowers, — nor ice nor stone to blame:
But it can melt, that ice, can bloom, that stone,
Impassible to rule of day and night!
This terrifies me, thus compelled perceive,
Whatever love and faith we looked should spring
At advent of the authoritative star,
Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the source, —
These have leapt forth profusely in old time,
These still respond with promptitude to-day,
At challenge of — what unacknowledged powers
O' the air, what uncommissioned meteors, warmth
By law, and light by rule should supersede?
For see this priest, this Caponsacchi, stung
At the first summons, — "Help for honor's sake,
Play the man, pity the oppressed!" — no pause,
How does he lay about him in the midst,
Strike any foe, right wrong at any risk,
All blindness, bravery and obedience! — blind?
Ay, as a man would be inside the sun,
Delirious with the plenitude of light
Should interfuse him to the finger-ends —

Let him rush straight, and how shall he go wrong?
Where are the Christians in their panoply?
The loins we girt about with truth, the breasts
Righteousness plated round, the shield of faith,
The helmet of salvation, and that sword
O' the Spirit, even the word of God, — where these?
Slunk into corners! Oh, I hear at once
Hubbub of protestation! "What, we monks,
We friars, of such an order, such a rule,
Have not we fought, bled, left our martyr-mark
At every point along the boundary-line
'Twixt true and false, religion and the world,
Where this or the other dogma of our Church
Called for defence?" And I, despite myself,
How can I but speak loud what truth speaks low,
"Or better than the best, or nothing serves!
What boots deed, I can cap and cover straight
With such another doughtiness to match,
Done at an instinct of the natural man?"
Immolate body, sacrifice soul too, —
Do not these publicans the same? Outstrip!
Or else stop race you boast runs neck and neck,
You with the wings, they with the feet, — for shame!
Oh, I remark your diligence and zeal!
Five years long, now, rounds faith into my ears,
"Help thou, or Christendom is done to death!"
Five years since, in the Province of To-kien,
Which is in China as some people know,
Maigrot, my Vicar Apostolic there,
Having a great qualm, issues a decree.
Alack, the converts use as God's name, not
Tien-chu but plain *Tien* or else mere *Shang-ti*,
As Jesuits please to fancy politic,

While, say Dominicans, it calls down fire, —
For *Tien* means heaven, and *Shang-ti*, supreme prince,
While *Tien-chu* means the lord of heaven : all cry,
"There is no business urgent for despatch
As that thou send a legate, specially
Cardinal Tournon, straight to Pekin, there
To settle and compose the difference ! "
So have I seen a potentate all fume
For some infringement of his realm's just right,
Some menace to a mud-built straw-thatched farm
O' the frontier ; while inside the mainland lie,
Quite undisputed-for in solitude,
Whole cities plague may waste or famine sap :
What if the sun crumble, the sands encroach,
While he looks on sublimely at his ease ?
How does their ruin touch the empire's bound ?

And is this little all that was to be ?
Where is the gloriously-decisive change,
Metamorphosis the immeasurable
Of human clay to divine gold, we looked
Should, in some poor sort, justify its price ?
Had an adept of the mere Rosy Cross
Spent his life to consummate the Great Work,
Would not we start to see the stuff it touched
Yield not a grain more than the vulgar got
By the old smelting-process years ago ?
If this were sad to see in just the sage
Who should profess so much, perform no more,
What is it when suspected in that Power
Who undertook to make and made the world,
Devised and did effect man, body and soul,
Ordained salvation for them both, and yet . . .
Well, is the thing we see, salvation ?

I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,
Within whose circle of experience burns
The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness, — God:
I must outlive a thing ere know it dead:
When I outlive the faith there is a sun,
When I lie, ashes to the very soul, —
Someone, not I, must wail above the heap,
"He died in dark whence never morn arose."
While I see day succeed the deepest night —
How can I speak but as I know? — my speech
Must be, throughout the darkness, "It will end:
The light that did burn, will burn!" Clouds obscure —
But for which obscuration all were bright?
Too hastily concluded! Sun-suffused,
A cloud may soothe the eye made blind by blaze, —
Better the very clarity of heaven:
The soft streaks are the beautiful and dear.
What but the weakness in a faith supplies
The incentive to humanity, no strength
Absolute, irresistible, comports?
How can man love but what he yearns to help?
And that which men think weakness within strength,
But angels know for strength and stronger yet —
What were it else but the first things made new,
But repetition of the miracle,
The divine instance of self-sacrifice
That never ends and aye begins for man?
So, never I miss footing in the maze,
No, — I have light nor fear the dark at all.

But are mankind not real, who pace outside
My petty circle, world that 's measured me?

And when they stumble even as I stand,
Have I a right to stop ear when they cry,
As they were phantoms who took clouds for crags,
Tripped and fell, where man's march might safely move?
Beside, the cry is other than a ghost's,
When out of the old time there pleads some bard,
Philosopher, or both, and — whispers not,
But words it boldly. "The inward work and worth
Of any mind, what other mind may judge
Save God who only knows the thing He made,
The veritable service He exacts?
It is the outward product men appraise.
Behold, an engine hoists a tower aloft:
'I looked that it should move the mountain too!'
Or else 'Had just a turret toppled down,
Success enough!' — may say the Machinist
Who knows what less or more result might be:
But we, who see that done we cannot do,
'A feat beyond man's force,' we men must say.
Regard me and that shake I gave the world!
I was born, not so long before Christ's birth
As Christ's birth haply did precede thy day, —
But many a watch before the star of dawn:
Therefore I lived, — it is thy creed affirms,
Pope Innocent, who art to answer me! —
Under conditions, nowise to escape,
Whereby salvation was impossible.
Each impulse to achieve the good and fair,
Each aspiration to the pure and true,
Being without a warrant or an aim,
Was just as sterile a felicity
As if the insect, born to spend his life
Soaring his circles, stopped them to describe
(Painfully motionless in the mid-air)

Some word of weighty counsel for man's sake,
Some 'Know thyself' or 'Take the golden mean!'
— Forwent his happy dance and the glad ray,
Died half an hour the sooner and was dust.
I, born to perish like the brutes, or worse,
Why not live brutishly, obey brutes' law?
But I, of body as of soul complete,
A gymnast at the games, philosopher
I' the schools, who painted, and made music, — all
Glories that met upon the tragic stage 1700
When the Third Poet's tread surprised the Two, —
Whose lot fell in a land where life was great
And sense went free and beauty lay profuse,
I, untouched by one adverse circumstance,
Adopted virtue as my rule of life,
Waived all reward, loved but for loving's sake,
And, what my heart taught me, I taught the world,
And have been teaching now two thousand years.
Witness my work, — plays that should please, forsooth!
'They might please, they may displease, they shall teach,
For truth's sake,' so I said, and did, and do. 1711
Five hundred years ere Paul spoke, Felix heard, —
How much of temperance and righteousness,
Judgment to come, did I find reason for,
Corroborate with my strong style that spared
No sin, nor swerved the more from branding brow
Because the sinner was called Zeus and God?
How nearly did I guess at that Paul knew?
How closely come, in what I represent
As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank? 1720
And as that limner not untruly limns
Who draws an object round or square, which square
Or round seems to the unassisted eye,
Though Galileo's tube display the same

Oval or oblong, — so, who controverts
I rendered rightly what proves wrongly wrought
Beside Paul's picture? Mine was true for me.
I saw that there are, first and above all,
The hidden forces, blind necessities,
Named Nature, but the thing's self unconceived:
Then follow, — how dependent upon these,
We know not, how imposed above ourselves,
We well know, — what I name the gods, a power
Various or one: for great and strong and good
Is there, and little, weak and bad there too,
Wisdom and folly: say, these make no God, —
What is it else that rules outside man's self?
A fact then, — always, to the naked eye, —
And so, the one revealment possible
Of what were unimagined else by man.
Therefore, what gods do, man may criticise,
Applaud, condemn, — how should he fear the truth? —
But likewise have in awe because of power,
Venerate for the main munificence,
And give the doubtful deed its due excuse
From the acknowledged creature of a day
To the Eternal and Divine. Thus, bold
Yet self-mistrusting, should man bear himself,
Most assured on what now concerns him most —
The law of his own life, the path he prints, —
Which law is virtue and not vice, I say, —
And least inquisitive where search least skills,
I' the nature we best give the clouds to keep.
What could I paint beyond a scheme like this
Out of the fragmentary truths where light
Lay fitful in a tenebrific time?
You have the sunrise now, joins truth to truth,
Shoots life and substance into death and void;

Themselves compose the whole we made before:
The forces and necessity grow God, —
The beings so contrarious that seemed gods,
Prove just His operation manifold
And multiform, translated, as must be,
Into intelligible shape so far
As suits our sense and sets us free to feel.
What if I let a child think, childhood-long,
That lightning, I would have him spare his eye,
Is a real arrow shot at naked orb?
The man knows more, but shuts his lids the same:
Lightning's cause comprehends nor man nor child.
Why then, my scheme, your better knowledge broke,
Presently re-adjusts itself, the small
Proportioned largelier, parts and whole named new:
So much, no more two thousand years have done!
Pope, dost thou dare pretend to punish me,
For not descrying sunshine at midnight,
Me who crept all-fours, found my way so far —
While thou rewardest teachers of the truth,
Who miss the plain way in the blaze of noon, —
Though just a word from that strong style of mine,
Grasped honestly in hand as guiding-staff,
Had pricked them a sure path across the bog,
That mire of cowardice and slush of lies
Wherein I find them wallow in wide day!"

How should I answer this Euripides?
Paul, — 't is a legend, — answered Seneca,
But that was in the day-spring; noon is now:
We have got too familiar with the light.
Shall I wish back once more that thrill of dawn?
When the whole truth-touched man burned up, one fire?

— Assured the trial, fiery, fierce, but fleet,
Would, from his little heap of ashes, lend
Wings to that conflagration of the world
Which Christ awaits ere He makes all things new:
So should the frail become the perfect, rapt
From glory of pain to glory of joy; and so,
Even in the end, — the act renouncing earth,
Lands, houses, husbands, wives and children here, —
Begin that other act which finds all, lost,
Regained, in this time even, a hundredfold,
And, in the next time, feels the finite love
Blent and embalmed with the eternal life.
So does the sun ghastlily seem to sink
In those north parts, lean all but out of life,
Desist a dread mere breathing stop, then slow
Re-assert day, begin the endless rise.
Was this too easy for our after-stage?
Was such a lighting-up of faith, in life,
Only allowed initiate, set man's step
In the true way by help of the great glow?
A way wherein it is ordained he walk,
Bearing to see the light from heaven still more
And more encroached on by the light of earth,
Tentatives earth puts forth to rival heaven,
Earthly incitements that mankind serve God
For man's sole sake, not God's and therefore man's.
Till at last, who distinguishes the sun
From a mere Druid fire on a far mount?
More praise to him who with his subtle prism
Shall decompose both beams and name the true.
In such sense, who is last proves first indeed;
For how could saints and martyrs fail see truth
Streak the night's blackness? Who is faithful now?
Who untwists heaven's white from the yellow flare

O' the world's gross torch, without night's foil that helped
Produce the Christian act so possible
When in the way stood Nero's cross and stake, —
So hard now when the world smiles "Right and wise!
Faith points the politic, the thrifty way,
Will make who plods it in the end returns
Beyond mere fool's-sport and improvidence.
We fools dance thro' the cornfield of this life,
Pluck ears to left and right and swallow raw,
— Nay, tread, at pleasure, a sheaf underfoot,
To get the better at some poppy-flower, —
Well aware we shall have so much less wheat
In the eventual harvest: you meantime
Waste not a spike, — the richlier will you reap!
What then? There will be always garnered meal
Sufficient for our comfortable loaf,
While you enjoy the undiminished sack!"
Is it not this ignoble confidence,
Cowardly hardihood, that dulls and damps,
Makes the old heroism impossible?

Unless . . . what whispers me of times to come?
What if it be the mission of that age
My death will usher into life, to shake
This torpor of assurance from our creed,
Re-introduce the doubt discarded, bring
That formidable danger back, we drove
Long ago to the distance and the dark?
No wild beast now prowls round the infant camp:
We have built wall and sleep in city safe:
But if some earthquake try the towers that laugh
To think they once saw lions rule outside,

And man stand out again, pale, resolute,
Prepared to die, — which means, alive at last?
As we broke up that old faith of the world,
Have we, next age, to break up this the new —
Faith, in the thing, grown faith in the report — 1860
Whence need to bravely disbelieve report
Through increased faith i' the thing reports belie?
Must we deny, — do they, these Molinists,
At peril of their body and their soul, —
Recognized truths, obedient to some truth
Unrecognized yet, but perceptible? —
Correct the portrait by the living face,
Man's God, by God's God in the mind of man?
Then, for the few that rise to the new height,
The many that must sink to the old depth, 1870
The multitude found fall away! A few,
E'en ere new law speak clear, may keep the old,
Preserve the Christian level, call good good
And evil evil, (even though razed and blank
The old titles,) helped by custom, habitude,
And all else they mistake for finer sense
O' the fact that reason warrants, — as before,
They hope perhaps, fear not impossibly.
At least some one Pompilia left the world
Will say "I know the right place by foot's feel, 1880
I took it and tread firm there; wherefore change?"
But what a multitude will surely fall
Quite through the crumbling truth, late subjacent,
Sink to the next discoverable base,
Rest upon human nature, settle there
On what is firm, the lust and pride of life!
A mass of men, whose very souls even now
Seem to need re-creating, — so they slink
Worm-like into the mud, light now lays bare, —

Whose future we dispose of with shut eyes
And whisper — "They are grafted, barren twigs,
Into the living stock of Christ: may bear
One day, till when they lie death-like, not dead," —
Those who with all the aid of Christ succumb,
How, without Christ, shall they, unaided, sink?
Whither but to this gulf before my eyes?
Do not we end, the century and I?
The impatient antimasque treads close on kibe
O' the very masque's self it will mock, — on me,
Last lingering personage, the impatient mime
Pushes already, — will I block the way?
Will my slow trail of garments ne'er leave space
For pantaloon, sock, plume and castanet?
Here comes the first experimentalist
In the new order of things, — he plays a priest;
Does he take inspiration from the Church,
Directly make her rule his law of life?
Not he: his own mere impulse guides the man —
Happily sometimes, since ourselves allow
He has danced, in gayety of heart, i' the main
The right step through the maze we bade him foot.
But if his heart had prompted him break loose
And mar the measure? Why, we must submit,
And thank the chance that brought him safe so far.
Will he repeat the prodigy? Perhaps.
Can he teach others how to quit themselves,
Show why this step was right while that were wrong?
How should he? "Ask your hearts as I ask mine,
And get discreetly through the morrice too;
If your hearts misdirect you, — quit the stage,
And make amends, — be there amends to make!"
Such is, for the Augustin that was once,
This Canon Caponsacchi we see now.

"But my heart answers to another tune,"
Puts in the Abate, second in the suite,
"I have my taste too, and tread no such step!
You choose the glorious life, and may, for me!
I like the lowest of life's appetites, —
So you judge, — but the very truth of joy
To my own apprehension which decides.
Call me knave and you get yourself called fool!
I live for greed, ambition, lust, revenge;
Attain these ends by force, guile: hypocrite,
To-day, perchance to-morrow recognized
The rational man, the type of common sense."
There's Loyola adapted to our time!
Under such guidance Guido plays his part,
He also influencing in the due turn
These last clods where I track intelligence
By any glimmer, these four at his beck
Ready to murder any, and, at their own,
As ready to murder him, — such make the world!
And, first effect of the new cause of things,
There they lie also duly, — the old pair
Of the weak head and not so wicked heart,
With the one Christian mother, wife and girl,
— Which three gifts seem to make an angel up, —
The world's first foot o' the dance is on their heads!
Still, I stand here, not off the stage though close
On the exit: and my last act, as my first,
I owe the scene, and Him who armed me thus
With Paul's sword as with Peter's key. I smite
With my whole strength once more, ere end my part,
Ending, so far as man may, this offence.
And when I raise my arm, who plucks my sleeve?
Who stops me in the righteous function, — foe

Or friend? Oh, still as ever, friends are they
Who, in the interest of outraged truth
Deprecate such rough handling of a lie!
The facts being proved and incontestable,
What is the last word I must listen to?
Perchance — "Spare yet a term this barren stock
We pray thee dig about and dung and dress
Till he repent and bring forth fruit even yet!"
Perchance — "So poor and swift a punishment
Shall throw him out of life with all that sin:
Let mercy rather pile up pain on pain
Till the flesh expiate what the soul pays else!"
Nowise! Remonstrants on each side commence
Instructing, there 's a new tribunal now
Higher than God's — the educated man's!
Nice sense of honor in the human breast
Supersedes here the old coarse oracle —
Confirming none the less a point or so
Wherein blind predecessors worked aright
By rule of thumb: as when Christ said, — when, where?
Enough, I find it pleaded in a place, —
"All other wrongs done, patiently I take:
But touch my honor and the case is changed!
I feel the due resentment, — *nemini*
Honorem trado is my quick retort."
Right of Him, just as if pronounced to-day!
Still, should the old authority be mute
Or doubtful or in speaking clash with new,
The younger takes permission to decide.
At last we have the instinct of the world
Ruling its household without tutelage:
And while the two laws, human and divine,
Have busied finger with this tangled case,

In pushes the brisk junior, cuts the knot,
Pronounces for acquittal. How it trips
Silverly o'er the tongue! "Remit the death!
Forgive, . . . well, in the old way, if thou please,
Decency and the relics of routine
Respected, — let the Count go free as air!
Since he may plead a priest's immunity, —
The minor orders help enough for that,
With Farinacci's license, — who decides
That the mere implication of such man,
So privileged, in any cause, before
Whatever Court except the Spiritual,
Straight quashes law-procedure, — quash it, then!
Remains a pretty loophole of escape
Moreover, that, beside the patent fact
O' the law's allowance, there 's involved the weal
O' the Popedom : a son's privilege at stake,
Thou wilt pretend the Church's interest,
Ignore all finer reasons to forgive!
But herein lies the crowning cogency —
(Let thy friends teach thee while thou tellest beads)
That in this case the spirit of culture speaks,
Civilization is imperative.
To her shall we remand all delicate points
Henceforth, nor take irregular advice
O' the sly, as heretofore : she used to hint
Remonstrances, when law was out of sorts
Because a saucy tongue was put to rest,
An eye that roved was cured of arrogance :
But why be forced to mumble under breath
What soon shall be acknowledged as plain fact,
Outspoken, say, in thy successor's time?
Methinks we see the golden age return!
Civilization and the Emperor

Succeed to Christianity and Pope.
One Emperor then, as one Pope now : meanwhile,
Anticipate a little ! We tell thee ' Take
Guido's life, sapped society shall crash,
Whereof the main prop was, is, and shall be
— Supremacy of husband over wife ! '
Does the man rule i' the house, and may his mate
Because of any plea dispute the same ?
Oh, pleas of all sorts shall abound, be sure,
One but allowed validity, — for, harsh
And savage, for, inept and silly-sooth,
For, this and that, will the ingenious sex
Demonstrate the best master e'er graced slave :
And there 's but one short way to end the coil, —
Acknowledge right and reason steadily
I' the man and master : then the wife submits
To plain truth broadly stated. Does the time
Advise we shift — a pillar ? nay, a stake
Out of its place i' the social tenement ?
One touch may send a shudder through the heap
And bring it toppling on our children's heads !
Moreover, if ours breed a qualm in thee,
Give thine own better feeling play for once !
Thou, whose own life winks o'er the socket-edge,
Wouldst thou it went out in such ugly snuff
As dooming sons dead, e'en though justice prompt ?
Why, on a certain feast, Barabbas' self
Was set free, not to cloud the general cheer :
Neither shalt thou pollute thy Sabbath close !
Mercy is safe and graceful. How one hears
The howl begin, scarce the three little taps
O' the silver mallet silent on thy brow, —
' His last act was to sacrifice a Count
And thereby screen a scandal of the Church !

Guido condemned, the Canon justified
Of course, — delinquents of his cloth go free!'
And so the Luthers chuckle, Calvins scowl,
So thy hand helps Molinos to the chair
Whence he may hold forth till doom's day on just
These *petit-maître* priestlings, — in the choir
Sanctus et Benedictus, with a brush
Of soft guitar strings that obey the thumb,
Touched by the bedside, for accompaniment!
Does this give umbrage to a husband? Death
To the fool, and to the priest impunity!
But no impunity to any friend
So simply over-loyal as these four
Who made religion of their patron's cause,
Believed in him and did his bidding straight,
Asked not one question but laid down the lives
This Pope took, — all four lives together make
Just his own length of days, — so, dead they lie,
As these were times when loyalty 's a drug,
And zeal in a subordinate too cheap
And common to be saved when we spend life!
Come, 't is too much good breath we waste in words:
The pardon, Holy Father! Spare grimace,
Shrugs and reluctance! Are not we the world,
Art not thou Priam? Let soft culture plead
Hecuba-like, '*non tali*' (Virgil serves)
'*Auxilio*' and the rest! Enough, it works!
The Pope relaxes, and the Prince is loth,
The father's bowels yearn, the man's will bends,
Reply is apt. Our tears on tremble, hearts
Big with a benediction, wait the word
Shall circulate thro' the city in a trice,
Set every window flaring, give each man

O' the mob his torch to wave for gratitude.
Pronounce then, for our breath and patience fail!"

I will, Sirs: but a voice other than yours
Quickens my spirit. "*Quis pro Domino?*
Who is upon the Lord's side?" asked the Count.
I, who write —
"On receipt of this command,
Acquaint Count Guido and his fellows four
They die to-morrow: could it be to-night,
The better, but the work to do, takes time.
Set with all diligence a scaffold up,
Not in the customary place, by Bridge
Saint Angelo, where die the common sort;
But since the man is noble, and his peers
By predilection haunt the People's Square,
There let him be beheaded in the midst,
And his companions hanged on either side:
So shall the quality see, fear and learn.
All which work takes time: till to-morrow, then,
Let there be prayer incessant for the five!"

For the main criminal I have no hope
Except in such a suddenness of fate.
I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth
Anywhere, sky or sea or world at all:
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze —
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain visible:
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,

And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.
Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad obscure sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain ; which must not be.
Enough, for I may die this very night :
And how should I dare die, this man let live ?

Carry this forthwith to the Governor !

XI.

GUIDO.

[Guido's last words, as a condemned man facing death, are given in Book XI. While his confessors, who are sent to watch beside him, await the hour calling him to the scaffold, his baffled soul beats against his doom, and, growing more and more aware of its helplessness, reveals itself more and more nakedly. He strives successively to conciliate his confessors, to convict the Pope and Christianity of pretence, unprecedented rigor, and of oppression in extorting a confession from him as warrant for the wrong done him; to explain and justify his course; to charge on Pompilia's "nullity" the responsibility for his "mistake"; and to represent himself as a fiery soul capable of valuing a bolder wife. Frantic and defiant, he seeks, at last, to bribe and then to threaten and taunt his confessors. Finally, with the Brothers of Mercy at the door, in a panic of terror, he pleads for his life with all the powers he knows, the greatest of these being — Pompilia.]

You are the Cardinal Acciaiuoli, and you,
Abate Panciatichi — two good Tuscan names:
Acciaiuoli — ah, your ancestor it was
Built the huge battlemented convent-block
Over the little forky flashing Greve
That takes the quick turn at the foot o' the hill
Just as one first sees Florence: oh those days!
'T is Ema, though, the other rivulet,
The one-arched brown brick bridge yawns over, — yes,

Gallop and go five minutes, and you gain
The Roman Gate from where the Ema 's bridged :
Kingfishers fly there : how I see the bend
O'erturreted by Certosa which he built,
That Seneschal (we styled him) of your House !
I do adjure you, help me, Sirs ! My blood
Comes from as far a source : ought it to end
This way, by leakage through their scaffold-planks
Into Rome's sink where her red refuse runs ?
Sirs, I beseech you by blood-sympathy,
If there be any vile experiment
In the air, — if this your visit simply prove,
When all 's done, just a well-intentioned trick
That tries for truth truer than truth itself,
By startling up a man, ere break of day,
To tell him he must die at sunset, — pshaw !
That man 's a Franceschini ; feel his pulse,
Laugh at your folly, and let 's all go sleep !
You have my last word, — innocent am I
As Innocent my Pope and murderer,
Innocent as a babe, as Mary's own,
As Mary's self, — I said, say and repeat, —
And why, then, should I die twelve hours hence ? I —
Whom, not twelve hours ago, the jailer bade
Turn to my straw-truss, settle and sleep sound
That I might wake the sooner, promptlier pay
His due of meat-and-drink-indulgence, cross
His palm with fee of the good-hand, beside,
As gallants use who go at large again !
For why ? All honest Rome approved my part ;
Whoever owned wife, sister, daughter, — nay,
Mistress, — had any shadow of any right
That looks like right, and, all the more resolved,
Held it with tooth and nail, — these manly men

Approved! I being for Rome, Rome was for me.
Then, there 's the point reserved, the subterfuge
My lawyers held by, kept for last resource,
Firm should all else, — the impossible fancy! — fail,
And sneaking burgess-spirit win the day.
The knaves! One plea at least would hold, — they laughed, —
One grappling-iron scratch the bottom-rock
Even should the middle mud let anchor go!
I hooked my cause on to the Clergy's, — plea
Which, even if law tipped off my hat and plume,
Revealed my priestly tonsure, saved me so.
The Pope moreover, this old Innocent,
Being so meek and mild and merciful,
So fond o' the poor and so fatigued of earth,
So . . . fifty thousand devils in deepest hell!
Why must he cure us of our strange conceit
Of the angel in man's likeness, that we loved
And looked should help us at a pinch? He help?
He pardon? Here 's his mind and message — death!
Thank the good Pope! Now, is he good in this,
Never mind, Christian, — no such stuff's extant, —
But will my death do credit to his reign,
Show he both lived and let live, so was good?
Cannot I live if he but like? "The law!"
Why, just the law gives him the very chance,
The precise leave to let my life alone,
Which the archangelic soul of him (he says)
Yearns after! Here they drop it in his palm,
My lawyers, capital o' the cursed kind, —
Drop life to take and hold and keep: but no!
He sighs, shakes head, refuses to shut hand,
Motions away the gift they bid him grasp,
And of the coyness comes — that off I run

And down I go, he best knows whither! mind,
He knows, who sets me rolling all the same!
Disinterested Vicar of our Lord,
This way he abrogates and disallows,
Nullifies and ignores, — reverts in fine
To the good and right, in detriment of me!
Talk away! Will you have the naked truth?
He 's sick of his life's supper, — swallowed lies:
So, hobbling bedward, needs must ease his maw
Just where I sit o' the door-sill. Sir Abate,
Can you do nothing? Friends, we used to frisk:
What of this sudden slash in a friend's face,
This cut across our good companionship
That showed its front so gay when both were young?
Were not we put into a beaten path,
Bid pace the world, we nobles born and bred,
We body of friends with each his scutcheon full
Of old achievement and impunity, —
Taking the laugh of morn and Sol's salute
As forth we fared, pricked on to breathe our steeds
And take equestrian sport over the green
Under the blue, across the crop, — what care?
If we went prancing up hill and down dale,
In and out of the level and the straight,
By the bit of pleasant byeway, where was harm?
Still Sol salutes me and the morning laughs:
I see my grandsire's hoof-prints, — point the spot
Where he drew rein, slipped saddle, and stabbed knave
For daring throw gibe — much less, stone — from pale:
Then back, and on, and up with the cavalcade.
Just so wend we, now canter, now converse,
Till, 'mid the jauncing pride and jaunty port,
Something of a sudden jerks at somebody —
A dagger is out, a flashing cut and thrust,

Because I play some prank my grandsire played,
And here I sprawl: where is the company? Gone!
A trot and a trample! only I lie trapped,
Writhe in a certain novel springe just set
By the good old Pope: I 'm first prize. Warn me? Why?
Apprise me that the law o' the game is changed?
Enough that I 'm a warning, as I writhe,
To all and each my fellows of the file,
And make law plain henceforward past mistake,
"For such a prank, death is the penalty!"
Pope the Five Hundredth (what do I know or care?)
Deputes your Eminency and Abateship
To announce that, twelve hours from this time, he needs
I just essay upon my body and soul
The virtue of his brand-new engine, prove
Represser of the pranksome! I 'm the first!
Thanks. Do you know what teeth you mean to try
The sharpness of, on this soft neck and throat?
I know it, — I have seen and hate it, — ay,
As you shall, while I tell you! Let me talk,
Or leave me, at your pleasure! talk I must:
What is your visit but my lure to talk?
Nay, you have something to disclose? — a smile,
At end of the forced sternness, means to mock
The heart-beats here? I call your two hearts stone!
Is your charge to stay with me till I die?
Be tacit as your bench, then! Use your ears,
I use my tongue: how glibly yours will run
At pleasant supper-time . . . God's curse! . . . to-night
When all the guests jump up, begin so brisk
"Welcome, his Eminence who shrived the wretch!
Now we shall have the Abate's story!"

Life!

How I could spill this overplus of mine
Among those hoar-haired, shrunk-shanked odds and ends
Of body and soul old age is chewing dry!
Those windlestraws that stare while purblind death
Mows here, mows there, makes hay of juicy me,
And misses just the bunch of withered weed
Would brighten hell and streak its smoke with flame!
How the life I could shed yet never shrink,
Would drench their stalks with sap like grass in May!
Is it not terrible, I entreat you, Sirs? —
With manifold and plenitudinous life,
Prompt at death's menace to give blow for threat,
Answer his "Be thou not!" by "Thus I am!" —
Terrible so to be alive yet die?

How I live, how I see! so, — how I speak!
Lucidity of soul unlocks the lips:
I never had the words at will before.
How I see all my folly at a glance!
"A man requires a woman and a wife:"
There was my folly; I believed the saw.
I knew that just myself concerned myself,
Yet needs must look for what I seemed to lack,
In a woman, — why, the woman 's in the man!
Fools we are, how we learn things when too late!
Overmuch life turns round my woman-side:
The male and female in me, mixed before,
Settle of a sudden; I 'm my wife outright
In this unmanly appetite for truth,
This careless courage as to consequence,
This instantaneous sight through things and through,
This voluble rhetoric, if you please, — 't is she!

Here you have that Pompilia whom I slew,
Also the folly for which I slew her!
Fool!
And, fool-like, what is it I wander from?
What did I say of your sharp iron tooth?
Ah, — that I know the hateful thing! this way.
I chanced to stroll forth, many a good year gone,
One warm Spring eve in Rome, and unaware
Looking, mayhap, to count what stars were out,
Came on your fine axe in a frame, that falls
And so cuts off a man's head underneath,
Mannaia, — thus we made acquaintance first:
Out of the way, in a by-part o' the town,
At the Mouth-of-Truth o' the river-side, you know:
One goes by the Capitol: and wherefore coy,
Retiring out of crowded noisy Rome?
Because a very little time ago
It had done service, chopped off head from trunk
Belonging to a fellow whose poor house
The thing must make a point to stand before —
Felice Whatsoever-was-the-name
Who stabled buffaloes and so gained bread,
(Our clowns unyoke them in the ground hard by)
And, after use of much improper speech,
Had struck at Duke Some-title-or-other's face,
Because he kidnapped, carried away and kept
Felice's sister who would sit and sing
I' the filthy doorway while she plaited fringe
To deck the brutes with, — on their gear it goes, —
The good girl with the velvet in her voice.
So did the Duke, so did Felice, so
Did Justice, intervening with her axe.
There the man-mutilating engine stood
At ease, both gay and grim, like a Swiss guard

Off duty, — purified itself as well,
Getting dry, sweet and proper for next week, —
And doing incidental good, 't was hoped,
To the rough lesson-lacking populace
Who now and then, forsooth, must right their wrongs!
There stood the twelve-foot-square of scaffold, railed
Considerately round to elbow-height,
For fear an officer should tumble thence
And sprain his ankle and be lame a month,
Through starting when the axe fell and head too!
Railed likewise were the steps whereby 't was reached.
All of it painted red: red, in the midst,
Ran up two narrow tall beams barred across,
Since from the summit, some twelve feet to reach,
The iron plate with the sharp shearing edge
Had slammed, jerked, shot, slid, — I shall soon find which! —
And so lay quiet, fast in its fit place,
The wooden half-moon collar, now eclipsed
By the blade which blocked its curvature: apart,
The other half, — the under half-moon board
Which, helped by this, completes a neck's embrace, —
Joined to a sort of desk that wheels aside
Out of the way when done with, — down you kneel,
In you 're pushed, over you the other drops,
Tight you 're clipped, whiz, there 's the blade cleaves its best,
Out trundles body, down flops head on floor,
And where 's your soul gone? That, too, I shall find!
This kneeling place was red, red, never fear!
But only slimy-like with paint, not blood,
For why? a decent pitcher stood at hand,
A broad dish to hold sawdust, and a broom
By some unnamed utensil, — scraper-rake, —

Each with a conscious air of duty done.
Underneath, loungers, — boys and some few men, —
Discoursed this platter, named the other tool,
Just as, when grooms tie up and dress a steed,
Boys lounge and look on, and elucubrate
What the round brush is used for, what the square, —
So was explained — to me the skill-less then —
The manner of the grooming for next world
Undergone by Felice What 's-his-name.
There 's no such lovely mouth in Rome as May —
May's crescent is no half-moon of red plank,
And came now tilting o'er the wave i' the west,
One greenish-golden sea, right 'twixt those bars
Of the engine — I began acquaintance with,
Understood, hated, hurried from before,
To have it out of sight and cleanse my soul !
Here it is all again, conserved for use :
Twelve hours hence, I may know more, not hate worse.

That young May-moon-month ! Devils of the deep !
Was not a Pope then Pope as much as now ?
Used not he chirrup o'er the Merry Tales,
Chuckle, — his nephew so exact the wag
To play a jealous cullion such a trick
As wins the wife i' the pleasant story ! Well ?
Why do things change ? Wherefore is Rome unRomed ?
I tell you, ere Felice's corpse was cold,
The Duke, that night, threw wide his palace-doors,
Received the compliments o' the quality
For justice done him, — bowed and smirked his best,
And in return passed round a pretty thing,
A portrait of Felice's sister's self,
Florid old rogue Albano's masterpiece,
As — better than virginity in rags —

Bouncing Europa on the back o' the bull:
They laughed and took their road the safelier home.
Ah, but times change, there 's quite another Pope,
I do the Duke's deed, take Felice's place,
And, being no Felice, lout and clout,
Stomach but ill the phrase "I lose my head!"
How euphemistic! Lose what? Lose your ring,
Your snuff-box, tablets, kerchief! — but, your head?
I learnt the process at an early age;
'T was useful knowledge, in those same old days,
To know the way a head is set on neck.
My fencing-master urged "Would you excel?
Rest not content with mere bold give-and-guard,
Nor pink the antagonist somehow-anyhow!
See me dissect a little, and know your game!
Only anatomy makes a thrust the thing."
Oh Cardinal, those lithe live necks of ours!
Here go the vertebræ, here's *Atlas*, here
Axis, and here the symphyses stop short,
So wisely and well, — as, o'er a corpse, we cant, —
And here 's the silver cord which . . . what 's our word?
Depends from the gold bowl, which loosed (not "lost")
Lets us from heaven to hell, — one chop, we 're loose!
"And not much pain i' the process," quoth a sage:
Who told him? Not Felice's ghost, I think!
Such "losing" is scarce Mother Nature's mode.
She fain would have cord ease itself away,
Worn to a thread by threescore years and ten,
Snap while we slumber: that seems bearable.
I 'm told one clot of blood extravasate
Ends one as certainly as Roland's sword, —
One drop of lymph suffused proves Oliver's mace, —

Intruding, either of the pleasant pair,
On he arachnoid tunic of my brain.
That 's Nature's way of loosing cord ! — but Art,
How of Art's process with the engine here,
When bowl and cord alike are crushed across,
Bored between, bruised through ? Why, if Fagon's self,
The French Court's pride, that famed practitioner,
Would pass his cold pale lightning of a knife,
Pistoja-ware, adroit 'twixt joint and joint,
With just a "See how facile, gentlefolk ! " —
The thing were not so bad to bear ! Brute force
Cuts as he comes, breaks in, breaks on, breaks out
O' the hard and soft of you : is that the same ?
A lithe snake thrids the hedge, makes throb no leaf:
A heavy ox sets chests to brier and branch,
Bursts somehow through, and leaves one hideous hole
Behind him !

And why, why must this needs be ?
Oh, if men were but good ! They are not good,
Nowise like Peter : people called him rough,
But if, as I left Rome, I spoke the Saint,
— "*Petrus, quo vadis ?*" — doubtless, I should hear,
"To free the prisoner and forgive his fault !
I plucked the absolute dead from God's own bar,
And raised up Dorcas, — why not rescue thee ? "
What would cost one such nullifying word ?
If Innocent succeeds to Peter's place,
Let him think Peter's thought, speak Peter's speech !
I say, he is bound to it : friends, how say you ?
Concede I be all one bloodguiltiness
And mystery of murder in the flesh,
Why should that fact keep the Pope's mouth shut fast ?
He execrates my crime, — good ! — sees hell yawn

One inch from the red plank's end which I press, —
Nothing is better! What 's the consequence?
How should a Pope proceed that knows his cue?
Why, leave me linger out my minute here,
Since close on death comes judgment and comes doom,
Not crib at dawn its pittance from a sheep
Destined ere dewfall to be butcher's-meat!
Think, Sirs, if I have done you any harm,
And you require the natural revenge,
Suppose, and so intend to poison me,
— Just as you take and slip into my draught
The paperful of powder that clears scores,
You notice on my brow a certain blue:
How you both overset the wine at once!
How you both smile! "Our enemy has the plague!
Twelve hours hence he 'll be scraping his bones bare
Of that intolerable flesh, and die,
Frenzied with pain: no need for poison here!
Step aside and enjoy the spectacle!"
Tender for souls are you, Pope Innocent!
Christ's maxim is — one soul outweighs the world:
Respite me, save a soul, then, curse the world!
"No," venerable sire, I hear you smirk,
"No: for Christ's gospel changes names, not things,
Renews the obsolete, does nothing more!
Our fire-new gospel is re-tinkered law,
Our mercy, justice, — Jove's rechristened God, —
Nay, whereas, in the popular conceit,
'T is pity that old harsh Law somehow limps,
Lingers on earth, although Law's day be done,
Else would benignant Gospel interpose,
Not furtively as now, but bold and frank
O'erflutter us with healing in her wings,
Law being harshness, Gospel only love —

We tell the people, on the contrary,
Gospel takes up the rod which Law lets fall;
Mercy is vigilant when justice sleeps!
Does Law permit a taste of Gospel-grace?
The secular arm allow the spiritual power
To act for once? — no compliment so fine
As that our Gospel handsomely turn harsh,
Thrust victim back on Law the nice and coy!"
Yes, you do say so, else you would forgive
Me whom Law does not touch but tosses you!
Don't think to put on the professional face!
You know what I know: casuists as you are,
Each nerve must creep, each hair start, sting and stand,
At such illogical inconsequence!
Dear my friends, do but see! A murder's tried,
There are two parties to the cause: I'm one,
— Defend myself, as somebody must do:
I have the best o' the battle: that's a fact,
Simple fact, — fancies find no place just now.
What though half Rome condemned me? Half approved:
And, none disputes, the luck is mine at last,
All Rome, i' the main, acquitting me: whereon,
What has the Pope to ask but "How finds Law?"
"I find," replies Law, "I have erred this while:
Guilty or guiltless, Guido proves a priest,
No layman: he is therefore yours, not mine:
I bound him: loose him, you whose will is Christ's!"
And now what does this Vicar of our Lord,
Shepherd o' the flock, — one of whose charge bleats sore
For crook's help from the quag wherein it drowns?
Law suffers him employ the crumpled end:
His pleasure is to turn staff, use the point,
And thrust the shuddering sheep, he calls a wolf,

Back and back, down and down to where hell gapes!
"Guiltless," cries Law — "Guilty" corrects the Pope!
"Guilty," for the whim's sake! "Guilty," he somehow thinks,
And anyhow says: 't is truth; he dares not lie!

Others should do the lying. That 's the cause
Brings you both here: I ought in decency
Confess to you that I deserve my fate,
Am guilty, as the Pope thinks, — ay, to the end,
Keep up the jest, lie on, lie ever, lie
I' the latest gasp of me! What reason, Sirs?
Because to-morrow will succeed to-day
For you, though not for me: and if I stick
Still to the truth, declare with my last breath,
I die an innocent and murdered man, —
Why, there 's the tongue of Rome will wag apace
This time to-morrow: don't I hear the talk!
"So, to the last he proved impenitent?
Pagans have said as much of martyred saints!
Law demurred, washed her hands of the whole case.
Prince Somebody said this, Duke Something, that.
Doubtless the man 's dead, dead enough, don't fear!
But, hang it, what if there have been a spice,
A touch of . . . eh? You see, the Pope 's so old,
Some of us add, obtuse: age never slips
The chance of shoving youth to face death first!"
And so on. Therefore to suppress such talk
You two come here, entreat I tell you lies,
And end, the edifying way. I end,
Telling the truth! Your self-styled shepherd thieves!
A thief — and how thieves hate the wolves we know:
Damage to theft, damage to thrift, all 's one!
The red hand is sworn foe of the black jaw.

That 's only natural, that 's right enough :
But why the wolf should compliment the thief
With shepherd's title, bark out life in thanks,
And, spiteless, lick the prong that spits him, — eh,
Cardinal ? My Abate, scarcely thus !
There, let my sheepskin-garb, a curse on 't, go —
Leave my teeth free if I must show my shag !
Repent ? What good shall follow ? If I pass
Twelve hours repenting, will that fact hold fast
The thirteenth at the horrid dozen's end ?
If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash, tear,
Foam, rave, to give your story the due grace,
Will that assist the engine half-way back
Into its hiding-house ? — boards, shaking now,
Bone against bone, like some old skeleton bat
That wants, at winter's end, to wake and prey!
Will howling put the spectre back to sleep ?
Ah, but I misconceive your object, Sirs !
Since I want new life like the creature, — life,
Being done with here, begins i' the world away :
I shall next have " Come, mortals, and be judged ! "
There 's but a minute betwixt this and then :
So, quick, be sorry since it saves my soul !
Sirs, truth shall save it, since no lies assist !
Hear the truth, you, whatever you style yourselves,
Civilization and society !
Come, one good grapple, I with all the world !
Dying in cold blood is the desperate thing ;
The angry heart explodes, bears off in blaze
The indignant soul, and I 'm combustion-ripe.
Why, you intend to do your worst with me !
That 's in your eyes ! You dare no more than death,
And mean no less. I must make up my mind.
So Pietro, — when I chased him here and there,

Morsel by morsel cut away the life
I loathed, — cried for just respite to confess
And save his soul: much respite did I grant!
Why grant me respite who deserve my doom?
Me — who engaged to play a prize, fight you,
Knowing your arms, and foil you, trick for trick,
At rapier-fence, your match and, maybe, more.
I knew that if I chose sin certain sins,
Solace my lusts out of the regular way
Prescribed me, I should find you in the path,
Have to try skill with a redoubted foe;
You would lunge, I would parry, and make end.
At last, occasion of a murder comes:
We cross blades, I, for all my brag, break guard,
And in goes the cold iron at my breast,
Out at my back, and end is made of me.
You stand confessed the adroiter swordsman, — ay,
But on your triumph you increase, it seems,
Want more of me than lying flat on face:
I ought to raise my ruined head, allege
Not simply I pushed worse blade o' the pair,
But my antagonist dispensed with steel!
There was no passage of arms, you looked me low,
With brow and eye abolished cut and thrust
Nor used the vulgar weapon! This chance scratch,
This incidental hurt, this sort of hole
I' the heart of me? I stumbled, got it so!
Fell on my own sword as a bungler may!
Yourself proscribe such heathen tools, and trust
To the naked virtue: it was virtue stood
Unarmed and awed me, — on my brow there burned
Crime out so plainly intolerably red,
That I was fain to cry — "Down to the dust
With me, and bury there brow, brand and all!"

Law had essayed the adventure, — but what's Law?
Morality exposed the Gorgon shield!
Morality and Religion conquer me.
If Law sufficed would you come here, entreat
I supplement law, and confess forsooth?
Did not the Trial show things plain enough?
"Ah, but a word of the man's very self
Would somehow put the keystone in its place
And crown the arch!" Then take the word you want!

I say that, long ago, when things began,
All the world made agreement, such and such
Were pleasure-giving profit-bearing acts,
But henceforth extra-legal, nor to be:
You must not kill the man whose death would please
And profit you, unless his life stop yours
Plainly, and need so be put aside:
Get the thing by a public course, by law,
Only no private bloodshed as of old!
All of us, for the good of every one,
Renounced such license and conformed to law:
Who breaks law, breaks pact therefore, helps himself
To pleasure and profit over and above the due,
And must pay forfeit, — pain beyond his share:
For, pleasure being the sole good in the world,
Anyone's pleasure turns to someone's pain,
So, law must watch for everyone, — say we,
Who call things wicked that give too much joy,
And nickname mere reprisal, envy makes,
Punishment: quite right! thus the world goes round.
I, being well aware such pact there was,
I, in my time who found advantage come
Of law's observance and crime's penalty, —
Who, but for wholesome fear law bred in friends,

Had doubtless given example long ago,
Furnished forth some friend's pleasure with my pain,
And, by my death, pieced out his scanty life, —
I could not, for that foolish life of me,
Help risking law's infringement, — I broke bond,
And needs must pay price, — wherefore, here 's my head,
Flung with a flourish ! But, repentance too ?
But pure and simple sorrow for law's breach
Rather than blunderer's-ineptitude ?
Cardinal, no ! Abate, scarcely thus !
'T is the fault, not that I dared try a fall
With Law and straightway am found undermost.
But that I failed to see, above man's law,
God's precept you, the Christians, recognize ?
Colly my cow ! Don't fidget, Cardinal !
Abate, cross your breast and count your beads
And exorcise the devil, for here he stands
And stiffens in the bristly nape of neck,
Daring you drive him hence ! You, Christians both ?
I say, if ever was such faith at all
Born in the world, by your community
Suffered to live its little tick of time,
'T is dead of age, now, ludicrously dead ;
Honor its ashes, if you be discreet,
In epitaph only ! For, concede its death,
Allow extinction, you may boast unchecked
What feats the thing did in a crazy land
At a fabulous epoch, — treat your faith, that way,
Just as you treat your relics : " Here 's a shred
Of saintly flesh, a scrap of blessed bone,
Raised King Cophetua, who was dead, to life
In Mesopotamy twelve centuries since,
Such was its virtue ! " — twangs the Sacristan,
Holding the shrine-box up, with hands like feet

Because of gout in every finger joint:
Does he bethink him to reduce one knob,
Allay one twinge by touching what he vaunts?
I think he half uncrooks fist to catch fee,
But, for the grace, the quality of cure, —
Cophetua was the man put that to proof!
Not otherwise, your faith is shrined and shown
And shamed at once: you banter while you bow!
Do you dispute this? Come, a monster-laugh,
A madman's laugh, allowed his Carnival
Later ten days than when all Rome, but he,
Laughed at the candle-contest: mine 's alight,
'T is just it sputter till the puff o' the Pope
End it to-morrow and the world turn Ash.
Come, thus I wave a wand and bring to pass
In a moment, in the twinkle of an eye,
What but that — feigning everywhere grows fact,
Professors turn possessors, realize
The faith they play with as a fancy now,
And bid it operate, have full effect
On every circumstance of life, to-day,
In Rome, — faith's flow set free at fountain-head!
Now, you 'll own, at this present, when I speak,
Before I work the wonder, there 's no man,
Woman or child in Rome, faith's fountain-head,
But might, if each were minded, realize
Conversely unbelief, faith's opposite —
Set it to work on life unflinchingly,
Yet give no symptom of an outward change:
Why should things change because men disbelieve
What 's incompatible, in the whited tomb,
With bones and rottenness one inch below?
What saintly act is done in Rome to-day
But might be prompted by the devil, — "is"

I say not, — "has been, and again may be, —"
I do say, full i' the face o' the crucifix
You try to stop my mouth with! Off with it!
Look in your own heart, if your soul have eyes!
You shall see reason why, though faith were fled,
Unbelief still might work the wires and move
Man, the machine, to play a faithful part.
Preside your college, Cardinal, in your cape,
Or, — having got above his head, grown Pope, —
Abate, gird your loins and wash my feet!
Do you suppose I am at loss at all
Why you crook, why you cringe, why fast or feast?
Praise, blame, sit, stand, lie or go! — all of it,
In each of you, purest unbelief may prompt,
And wit explain to who has eyes to see.
But, lo, I wave wand, make the false the true!
Here 's Rome believes in Christianity!
What an explosion, how the fragments fly
Of what was surface, mask and make-believe!
Begin now, — look at this Pope's-halberdier
In wasp-like black and yellow foolery!
He, doing duty at the corridor,
Wakes from a muse and stands convinced of sin!
Down he flings halbert, leaps the passage-length,
Pushes into the presence, pantingly
Submits the extreme peril of the case
To the Pope's self, — whom in the world beside? —
And the Pope breaks talk with ambassador,
Bids aside bishop, wills the whole world wait
Till he secure that prize, outweighs the world,
A soul, relieve the sentry of his qualm!
His Altitude the Referendary, —
Robed right, and ready for the usher's word
To pay devoir, — is, of all times, just then

'Ware of a master-stroke of argument
Will cut the spinal cord . . . ugh, ugh! . . . I mean,
Paralyze Molinism for evermore!
Straight he leaves lobby, trundles, two and two,
Down steps to reach home, write, if but a word
Shall end the impudence: he leaves who likes
Go pacify the Pope: there 's Christ to serve!
How otherwise would men display their zeal?
If the same sentry had the least surmise
A powder-barrel 'neath the pavement lay
In neighborhood with what might prove a match,
Meant to blow sky-high Pope and presence both —
Would he not break through courtiers, rank and file,
Bundle up, bear off and save body so,
The Pope, no matter for his priceless soul?
There 's no fool's-freak here, naught to soundly swinge,
Only a man in earnest, you 'll so praise
And pay and prate about, that earth shall ring!
Had thought possessed the Referendary
His jewel-case at home was left ajar,
What would be wrong in running, robes awry,
To be beforehand with the pilferer?
What talk then of indecent haste? Which means,
That both these, each in his degree, would do
Just that, — for a comparative nothing's sake,
And thereby gain approval and reward, —
Which, done for what Christ says is worth the world,
Procures the doer curses, cuffs and kicks.
I call such difference 'twixt act and act,
Sheer lunacy unless your truth on lip
Be recognized a lie in heart of you!
How do you all act, promptly or in doubt,
When there 's a guest poisoned at supper-time
And he sits chatting on with spot on cheek?

"Pluck him by the skirt, and round him in the ears,
Have at him by the beard, warn anyhow!"
Good, and this other friend that 's cheat and thief
And dissolute, — go stop the devil's feast,
Withdraw him from the imminent hell-fire!
Why, for your life, you dare not tell your friend
"You lie, and I admonish you for Christ!"
Who yet dare seek that same man at the Mass
To warn him — on his knees, and tinkle near, — 680
He left a cask a-tilt, a tap unturned,
The Trebbian running: what a grateful jump
Out of the Church rewards your vigilance!
Perform that self-same service just a thought
More maladroitly, — since a bishop sits
At function! — and he budges not, bites lip, —
"You see my case: how can I quit my post?
He has an eye to any such default.
See to it, neighbor, I beseech your love!"
He and you know the relative worth of things, 690
What is permissible or inopportune.
Contort your brows! You know I speak the truth:
Gold is called gold, and dross called dross, i' the Book:
Gold you let lie and dross pick up and prize!
— Despite your muster of some fifty monks
And nuns a-maundering here and mumping there,
Who could, and on occasion would, spurn dross,
Clutch gold, and prove their faith a fact so far, —
I grant you! Fifty times the number squeak
And gibber in the madhouse — firm of faith, 700
This fellow, that his nose supports the moon;
The other, that his straw hat crowns him Pope:
Does that prove all the world outside insane?
Do fifty miracle-mongers match the mob
That acts on the frank faithless principle,

Born-baptized-and-bred Christian-atheists, each
With just as much a right to judge as you, —
As many senses in his soul, and nerves
I' neck of him as I, — whom, soul and sense,
Neck and nerve, you abolish presently, —
I being the unit in creation now
Who pay the Maker, in this speech of mine,
A creature's duty, spend my last of breath
In bearing witness, even by my worst fault,
To the creature's obligation, absolute,
Perpetual: my worst fault protests, "The faith
Claims all of me: I would give all she claims,
But for a spice of doubt: the risk 's too rash:
Double or quits, I play, but, all or naught,
Exceeds my courage: therefore, I descend
To the next faith with no dubiety —
Faith in the present life, made last as long
And prove as full of pleasure as may hap,
Whatever pain it cause the world." I 'm wrong?
I 've had my life, whate'er I lose: I 'm right?
I 've got the single good there was to gain.
Entire faith, or else complete unbelief!
Aught between has my loathing and contempt,
Mine and God's also, doubtless: ask yourself,
Cardinal, where and how you like a man!
Why, either with your feet upon his head,
Confessed your caudatory, or, at large,
The stranger in the crowd who caps to you
But keeps his distance, — why should he presume?
You want no hanger-on and dropper-off,
Now yours, and now not yours but quite his own,
According as the sky looks black or bright.
Just so I capped to and kept off from faith —
You promised trudge behind through fair and foul,

Yet leave i' the lurch at the first spit of rain.
Who holds to faith whenever rain begins?
What does the father when his son lies dead,
The merchant when his money-bags take wing,
The politician whom a rival ousts?
No case but has its conduct, faith prescribes:
Where 's the obedience that shall edify?
Why, they laugh frankly in the face of faith
And take the natural course, — this rends his hair
Because his child is taken to God's breast,
That gnashes teeth and raves at loss of trash
Which rust corrupts and thieves break through and steal,
And this, enabled to inherit earth
Through meekness, curses till your blood runs cold!
Down they all drop to my low level, rest
Heart upon dungy earth that 's warm and soft,
And let who please attempt the altitudes.
Each playing prodigal son of heavenly sire,
Turning his nose up at the fatted calf,
Fain to fill belly with the husks, we swine
Did eat by born depravity of taste!

Enough of the hypocrites. But you, Sirs, you —
Who never budged from litter where I lay,
And buried snout i' the draff-box while I fed,
Cried amen to my creed's one article —
"Get pleasure, 'scape pain, — give your preference
To the immediate good, for time is brief,
And death ends good and ill and everything!
What 's got is gained, what 's gained soon is gained
twice,
And, — inasmuch as faith gains most, — feign faith!."
So did we brother-like pass word about:
— You, now, — like bloody drunkards but half-drunk,

Who fool men yet perceive men find them fools, —
Vexed that a titter gains the gravest mouth, —
O' the sudden you must needs re-introduce
Solemnity, straight sober undue mirth
By a blow dealt me your boon companion here
Who, using the old license, dreamed of harm
No more than snow in harvest : yet it falls !
You check the merriment effectually
By pushing your abrupt machine i' the midst,
Making me Rome's example : blood for wine !
The general good needs that you chop and change !
I may dislike the hocus-pocus, — Rome,
The laughter-loving people, won't they stare
Chap-fallen ! — while serious natures sermonize
" The magistrate, he beareth not the sword
In vain ; who sins may taste its edge, we see ! "
Why my sin, drunkards ? Where have I abused
Liberty, scandalized you all so much ?
Who called me, who crooked finger till I came,
Fool that I was, to join companionship ?
I knew my own mind, meant to live my life,
Elude your envy, or else make a stand,
Take my own part and sell you my life dear.
But it was " Fie ! No prejudice in the world
To the proper manly instinct ! Cast your lot
Into our lap, one genius ruled our births,
We 'll compass joy by concert ; take with us
The regular irregular way i' the wood ;
You 'll miss no game through riding breast by breast,
In this preserve, the Church's park and pale,
Rather than outside where the world lies waste ! "
Come, if you said not that, did you say this ?
Give plain and terrible warning, " Live, enjoy ?
Such life begins in death and ends in hell !

Dare you bid us assist your sins, us priests
Who hurry sin and sinners from the earth ?
No such delight for us, why then for you ?
Leave earth, seek heaven or find its opposite ! ”
Had you so warned me, not in lying words
But veritable deeds with tongues of flame,
That had been fair, that might have struck a man,
Silenced the squabble between soul and sense,
Compelled him to make mind up, take one course
Or the other, peradventure ! — wrong or right,
Foolish or wise, you would have been at least
Sincere, no question, — forced me choose, indulge
Or else renounce my instincts, still play wolf
Or find my way submissive to your fold,
Be red-crossed on my fleece, one sheep the more.
But you as good as bade me wear sheep's wool
Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide the noise
By mimicry of something like a bleat, —
Whence it comes that because, despite my care,
Because I smack my tongue too loud for once,
Drop baaing, here 's the village up in arms !
Have at the wolf's throat, you who hate the breed !
Oh, were it only open yet to choose —
One little time more — whether I 'd be free
Your foe, or subsidized your friend forsooth !
Should not you get a growl through the white fangs
In answer to your beckoning ! Cardinal,
Abate, managers o' the multitude,
I 'd turn your gloved hands to account, be sure !
You should manipulate the coarse rough mob :
'T is you I 'd deal directly with, not them, —
Using your fears : why touch the thing myself
When I could see you hunt, and then cry “ Shares
Quarter the carcase or we quarrel ; come,

Here 's the world ready to see justice done ! "
Oh, it had been a desperate game, but game
Wherein the winner's chance were worth the pains !
We 'd try conclusions ! — at the worst, what worse
Than this Mannaia-machine, each minute's talk
Helps push an inch the nearer me ? Fool, fool !

You understand me and forgive, sweet Sirs ?
I blame you, tear my hair and tell my woe —
All 's but a flourish, figure of rhetoric !
One must try each expedient to save life.
One makes fools look foolisher fifty-fold
By putting in their place men wise like you,
To take the full force of an argument
Would buffet their stolidity in vain.
If you should feel aggrieved by the mere wind
O' the blow that means to miss you and maul them,
That 's my success ! Is it not folly, now,
To say with folk, " A plausible defence —
We see through notwithstanding, and reject " ?
Reject the plausible they do, these fools,
Who never even make pretence to show
One point beyond its plausibility
In favor of the best belief they hold !
" Saint Somebody-or-other raised the dead : "
Did he ? How do you come to know as much ?
" Know it, what need ? The story 's plausible,
Avouched for by a martyrologist,
And why should good men sup on cheese and leeks
On such a saint's day, if there were no saint ? "
I praise the wisdom of these fools, and straight
Tell them my story — " plausible, but false ! "
False, to be sure ! What else can story be
That runs — a young wife tired of an old spouse,

Found a priest whom she fled away with, — both
Took their full pleasure in the two-days' flight,
Which a gray-headed grayer-hearted pair,
(Whose best boast was, their life had been a lie)
Helped for the love they bore all liars. Oh,
Here incredulity begins! Indeed?
Allow then, were no one point strictly true,
There's that i' the tale might seem like truth at least
To the unlucky husband, — jaundiced patch —
Jealousy maddens people, why not him?
Say, he was maddened, so forgivable!
Humanity pleads that though the wife were true,
The priest true, and the pair of liars true,
They might seem false to one man in the world!
A thousand gnats make up a serpent's sting,
And many sly soft stimulants to wrath
Compose a formidable wrong at last
That gets called easily by some one name
Not applicable to the single parts,
And so draws down a general revenge,
Excessive if you take crime, fault by fault.
Jealousy! I have known a score of plays,
Were listened to and laughed at in my time
As like the everyday-life on all sides,
Wherein the husband, mad as a March hare,
Suspected all the world contrived his shame.
What did the wife? The wife kissed both eyes blind,
Explained away ambiguous circumstance,
And while she held him captive by the hand,
Crowned his head, — you know what's the mockery, —
By half her body behind the curtain. That's
Nature now! That's the subject of a piece
I saw in Vallombrosa Convent, made
Expressly to teach men what marriage was!

But say "Just so did I misapprehend,
Imagine she deceived me to my face,"
And that's pretence too easily seen through!
All those eyes of all husbands in all plays,
At stare like one expanded peacock-tail,
Are laughed at for pretending to be keen
While horn-blind: but the moment I step forth —
Oh, I must needs o' the sudden prove a lynx
And look the heart, that stone-wall, through and through!
Such an eye, God's may be, — not yours nor mine.

Yes, presently . . . what hour is fleeting now?
When you cut earth away from under me,
I shall be left alone with, pushed beneath
Some such an apparitional dread orb
As the eye of God, since such an eye there glares:
I fancy it go filling up the void
Above my mote-self it devours, or what
Proves — wrath, immensity wreaks on nothingness.
Just how I felt once, couching through the dark,
Hard by Vittiano; young I was, and gay,
And wanting to trap fieldfares: first a spark
Tipped a bent, as a mere dew-globule might
Any stiff grass-stalk on the meadow, — this
Grew fiercer, flamed out full, and proved the sun.
What do I want with proverbs, precepts here?
Away with man! What shall I say to God?
This, if I find the tongue and keep the mind —
"Do Thou wipe out the being of me, and smear
This soul from off Thy white of things, I blot!
I am one huge and sheer mistake, — whose fault?
Not mine at least, who did not make myself!"
Someone declares my wife excused me so!
Perhaps she knew what argument to use.

Grind your teeth, Cardinal: Abate, writhe!
What else am I to cry out in my rage,
Unable to repent one particle
O' the past? Oh, how I wish some cold wise man
Would dig beneath the surface which you scrape,
Deal with the depths, pronounce on my desert
Groundedly! I want simple sober sense,
That asks, before it finishes with a dog,
Who taught the dog that trick you hang him for?
You both persist to call that act a crime,
Which sense would call . . . yes, I maintain it, Sirs, . . .
A blunder! At the worst, I stood in doubt
On cross-road, took one path of many paths:
It leads to the red thing, we all see now,
But nobody saw at first: one primrose-patch
In bank, one singing-bird in bush, the less,
Had warned me from such wayfare: let me prove!
Put me back to the cross-road, start afresh!
Advise me when I take the first false step!
Give me my wife: how should I use my wife,
Love her or hate her? Prompt my action now!
There she is, there she stands alive and pale,
The thirteen-years'-old child, with milk for blood,
Pompilia Comparini, as at first,
Which first is only four brief years ago!
I stand too in the little ground-floor room
O' the father's house at Via Vittoria: see!
Her so-called mother, — one arm round the waist
O' the child to keep her from the toys, let fall
At wonder I can live yet look so grim, —
Ushers her in, with deprecating wave
Of the other, — and she fronts me loose at last,
Held only by the mother's finger-tip.
Struck dumb, — for she was white enough before!

She eyes me with those frightened balls of black,
As heifer — the old simile comes pat —
Eyes tremblingly the altar and the priest.
The amazed look, all one insuppressive prayer, —
Might she but breathe, set free as heretofore,
Have this cup leave her lips unblistered, bear
Any cross anywhither anyhow,
So but alone, so but apart from me !
You are touched ? So am I, quite otherwise,
If 't is with pity. I resent my wrong,
Being a man : I only show man's soul
Through man's flesh : she sees mine, it strikes her thus !
Is that attractive ? To a youth perhaps —
Calf-creature, one-part boy to three-parts girl,
To whom it is a flattering novelty
That he, men use to motion from their path,
Can thus impose, thus terrify in turn
A chit whose terror shall be changed apace
To bliss unbearable when grace and glow,
Prowess and pride descend the throne and touch
Esther in all that pretty tremble, cured
By the dove o' the sceptre ! But myself am old,
O' the wane at least, in all things : what do you say
To her who frankly thus confirms my doubt ?
I am past the prime, I scare the woman-world,
Done-with that way : you like this piece of news ?
A little saucy rose-bud minx can strike
Death-damp into the breast of doughty king
Though 't were French Louis, — soul I understand, —
Saying, by gesture of repugnance, just
" Sire, you are regal, puissant and so forth,
But — young you have been, are not, nor will be ! "
In vain the mother nods, winks, bustles up,
" Count, girls incline to mature worth like you !

As for Pompilia, what's flesh, fish, or fowl
To one who apprehends no difference,
And would accept you even were you old
As you are . . . youngish by her father's side?
Trim but your beard a little, thin your bush
Of eyebrow; and for presence, portliness,
And decent gravity, you beat a boy!"
Deceive yourself one minute, if you may,
In presence of the child that so loves age,
Whose neck writhes, cords itself against your kiss,
Whose hand you wring stark, rigid with despair!
Well, I resent this; I am young in soul,
Nor old in body, — thews and sinews here, —
Though the vile surface be not smooth as once, —
Far beyond that first wheelwork which went wrong
Through the untempered iron ere 't was proof:
I am the wrought man worth ten times the crude,
Would woman see what this declines to see,
Declines to say "I see," — the officious word
That makes the thing, pricks on the soul to shoot
New fire into the half-used cinder, flesh!
Therefore 't is she begins with wronging me,
Who cannot but begin with hating her.
Our marriage follows: there she stands again!
Why do I laugh? Why, in the very gripe
O' the jaws of death's gigantic skull, do I
Grin back his grin, make sport of my own pangs?
Why from each clashing of his molars, ground
To make the devil bread from out my grist,
Leaps out a spark of mirth, a hellish toy?
Take notice we are lovers in a church,
Waiting the sacrament to make us one
And happy! Just as bid, she bears herself,
Comes and kneels, rises, speaks, is silent, — goes:

So have I brought my horse, by word and blow,
To stand stock-still and front the fire he dreads.
How can I other than remember this,
Resent the very obedience? Gain thereby?
Yes, I do gain my end and have my will, —
Thanks to whom? When the mother speaks the word,
She obeys it — even to enduring me!
There had been compensation in revolt —
Revolt's to quell: but martyrdom rehearsed,
But predetermined saintship for the sake
O' the mother? — "Go!" thought I, "we meet again!"
Pass the next weeks of dumb contented death,
She lives, — wakes up, installed in house and home,
Is mine, mine all day-long, all night-long mine.
Good folk begin at me with open mouth
"Now, at least, reconcile the child to life!
Study and make her love . . . that is, endure
The . . . hem! the . . . all of you though somewhat old,
Till it amount to something, in her eye,
As good as love, better a thousand times, —
Since nature helps the woman in such strait,
Makes passiveness her pleasure: failing which,
What if you give up boy-and-girl-fools'-play
And go on to wise friendship all at once?
Those boys and girls kiss themselves cold, you know,
Toy themselves tired and slink aside full soon
To friendship, as they name satiety:
Thither go you and wait their coming!" Thanks,
Considerate advisers, — but, fair play!
Had you and I, friends, started fair at first
We, keeping fair, might reach it, neck by neck,
This blessed goal, whenever fate so please:
But why am I to miss the daisied mile
The course begins with, why obtain the dust

Of the end precisely at the starting-point?
Why quaff life's cup blown free of all the beads,
The bright red froth wherein our beard should steep
Before our mouth essay the black o' the wine?
Foolish, the love-fit? Let me prove it such
Like you, before like you I puff things clear!
"The best's to come, no rapture but content!
Not love's first glory but a sober glow,
Not a spontaneous outburst in pure boon,
So much as, gained by patience, care and toil,
Proper appreciation and esteem!"
Go preach that to your nephews, not to me
Who, tired i' the midway of my life, would stop
And take my first refreshment, pluck a rose:
What's this coarse woolly hip, worn smooth of leaf,
You counsel I go plant in garden-plot,
Water with tears, manure with sweat and blood,
In confidence the seed shall germinate
And, for its very best, some far-off day,
Grow big, and blow me out a dog-rose bell?
Why must your nephews begin breathing spice
O' the hundred-petalled Provence prodigy?
Nay, more and worse, — would such my root bear rose —
Prove really flower and favorite, not the kind
That's queen, but those three leaves that make one cup
And hold the hedge-bird's breakfast, — then indeed
The prize though poor would pay the care and toil!
Respect we Nature that makes least as most,
Marvellous in the minim! But this bud,
Bit through and burned black by the tempter's tooth,
This bloom whose best grace was the slug outside
And the wasp inside its bosom, — call you "rose"?
Claim no immunity from a weed's fate

For the horrible present! What you call my wife
I call a nullity in female shape,
Vapid disgust, soon to be pungent plague,
When mixed with, made confusion and a curse
By two abominable nondescripts,
That father and that mother: think you see
The dreadful bronze our boast, we Aretines,
The Etruscan monster, the three-headed thing,
Bellerophon's foe! How name you the whole beast?
You choose to name the body from one head,
That of the simple kid which droops the eye,
Hangs the neck and dies tenderly enough:
I rather see the grisly lion belch
Flame out i' the midst, the serpent writhe her rings,
Grafted into the common stock for tail,
And name the brute, Chimæra which I slew!
How was there ever more to be — (concede
My wife's insipid harmless nullity) —
Dissociation from that pair of plagues —
That mother with her cunning and her cant —
The eyes with first their twinkle of conceit,
Then, dropped to earth in mock-demureness, — now,
The smile self-satisfied from ear to ear,
Now, the prim pursed-up mouth's protruded lips,
With deferential duck, slow swing of head,
Tempting the sudden fist of man too much, —
That owl-like screw of lid and rock of ruff!
As for the father, — Cardinal, you know,
The kind of idiot! — such are rife in Rome,
But they wear velvet commonly; good fools,
At the end of life, to furnish forth young folk
Who grin and bear with imbecility:
Since the stalled ass, the joker, sheds from jaw
Corn, in the joke, for those who laugh or starve.

But what say we to the same solemn beast
Wagging his ears and wishful of our pat,
When turned, with holes in hide and bones laid bare,
To forage for himself i' the waste o' the world,
Sir Dignity i' the dumps? Pat him? We drub
Self-knowledge, rather, into frowzy pate,
Teach Pietro to get trappings or go hang!
Fancy this quondam oracle in vogue
At Via Vittoria, this personified
Authority when time was, — Pantaloon
Flaunting his tom-fool tawdry just the same
As if Ash-Wednesday were mid-Carnival!
That 's the extreme and unforgivable
Of sins, as I account such. Have you stooped
For your own ends to bestialize yourself
By flattery of a fellow of this stamp?
The ends obtained or else shown out of reach,
He goes on, takes the flattery for pure truth, —
"You love, and honor me, of course: what next?"
What, but the trifle of the stabbing, friend? —
Which taught you how one worships when the shrine
Has lost the relic that we bent before.
Angry! And how could I be otherwise?
'T is plain: this pair of old pretentious fools
Meant to fool me: it happens, I fooled them.
Why could not these who sought to buy and sell
Me, — when they found themselves were bought and sold,
Make up their mind to the proved rule of right,
Be chattel and not chapman any more?
Miscalculation has its consequence;
But when the shepherd crooks a sheep-like thing
And meaning to get wool, dislodges fleece
And finds the veritable wolf beneath,

(How that staunch image serves at every turn !)
Does he, by way of being politic,
Pluck the first whisker grimly visible ?
Or rather grow in a trice all gratitude,
Protest this sort-of-what-one-might-name sheep
Beats the old other curly-coated kind,
And shall share board and bed, if so it deign,
With its discoverer, like a royal ram ?
Ay, thus, with chattering teeth and knocking knees,
Would wisdom treat the adventure ! these, forsooth,
Tried whisker-plucking, and so found what trap
The whisker kept perdue, two rows of teeth —
Sharp, as too late the prying fingers felt.
What would you have ? The fools transgress, the fools
Forthwith receive appropriate punishment :
They first insult me, I return the blow,
There follows noise enough : four hubbub months,
Now hue and cry, now whimpering and wail —
A perfect goose-yard cackle of complaint
Because I do not gild the geese their oats, —
I have enough of noise, ope wicket wide,
Sweep out the couple to go whine elsewhere,
Frightened a little, hurt in no respect,
And am just taking thought to breathe again,
Taste the sweet sudden silence all about,
When, there they raise it, the old noise I know,
At Rome i' the distance ! " What, begun once more ?
Whine on, wail ever, 't is the loser's right ! "
But eh, what sort of voice grows on the wind ?
Triumph it sounds and no complaint at all !
And triumph it is. My boast was premature :
The creatures, I turned forth, clapped wing and crew
Fighting-cock-fashion, — they had filched a pearl
From dung-heap, and might boast with cause enough !

I was defrauded of all bargained for:
You know, the Pope knows, not a soul but knows
My dowry was derision, my gain — muck,
My wife, (the Church declared my flesh and blood)
The nameless bastard of a common whore:
My old name turned henceforth to . . . shall I say
"He that received the ordure in his face"?
And they who planned this wrong, performed this wrong,
And then revealed this wrong to the wide world,
Rounded myself in the ears with my own wrong, —
Why, these were (note hell's lucky malice, now!)
These were just they who, they alone, could act
And publish and proclaim their infamy,
Secure that men would in a breath believe
Compassionate and pardon them, — for why?
They plainly were too stupid to invent,
Too simple to distinguish wrong from right, —
Inconscious agents they, the silly-sooth,
Of heaven's retributive justice on the strong
Proud cunning violent oppressor — me!
Follow them to their fate and help your best,
You Rome, Arezzo, foes called friends of me,
They gave the good long laugh to, at my cost!
Defray your share o' the cost, since you partook
The entertainment! Do! — assured the while,
That not one stab, I dealt to right and left,
But went the deeper for a fancy — this —
That each might do me two-fold service, find
A friend's face at the bottom of each wound,
And scratch its smirk a little!
Panciatichi!
There 's a report at Florence, — is it true? —
That when your relative the Cardinal
Built, only the other day, that barrack-bulk,

The palace in Via Larga, someone picked
From out the street a saucy quip enough
That fell there from its day's flight through the town,
About the flat front and the windows wide
And bulging heap of cornice, — hitched the joke
Into a sonnet, signed his name thereto,
And forthwith pinned on post the pleasantry :
For which he 's at the galleys, rowing now
Up to his waist in water, — just because
Panciatic and *lymphatic* rhymed so pat !
I hope, Sir, those who passed this joke on me
Were not unduly punished ? What say you,
Prince of the Church, my patron ? Nay, indeed,
I shall not dare insult your wits so much
As think this problem difficult to solve.
This Pietro and Violante then, I say,
These two ambiguous insects, changing name
And nature with the season's warmth or chill, —
Now, grovelled, grubbing toiling moiling ants,
A very synonym of thrift and peace, —
Anon, with lusty June to prick their heart,
Soared i' the air, winged flies for more offence,
Circled me, buzzed me deaf and stung me blind,
And stunk me dead with fetor in the face
Until I stopped the nuisance : there 's my crime !
Pity I did not suffer them subside
Into some further shape and final form
Of execrable life ? My masters, no !
I, by one blow, wisely cut short at once
Them and their transformations of disgust,
In the snug little Villa out of hand.
" Grant me confession, give bare time for that ! " —
Shouted the sinner till his mouth was stopped.
His life confessed ! — that was enough for me,

Who came to see that he did penance. 'S death!
Here 's a coil raised, a pother and for what?
Because strength, being provoked by weakness, fought
And conquered, — the world never heard the like!
Pah, how I spend my breath on them, as if
'T was their fate troubled me, too hard to range
Among the right and fit and proper things!

Ay, but Pompilia, — I await your word, —
She, unimpeached of crime, unimplicate
In folly, one of alien blood to these
I punish, why extend my claim, exact
Her portion of the penalty? Yes, friends,
I go too fast: the orator 's at fault:
Yes, ere I lay her, with your leave, by them
As she was laid at San Lorenzo late,
I ought to step back, lead you by degrees,
Recounting at each step some fresh offence,
Up to the red bed, — never fear, I will!
Gaze at her, where I place her, to begin,
Confound me with her gentleness and worth!
The horrible pair have fled and left her now,
She has her husband for her sole concern:
His wife, the woman fashioned for his help,
Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, the bride
To groom as is the Church and Spouse to Christ:
There she stands in his presence: "Thy desire
Shall be to the husband, o'er thee shall he rule!"
— "Pompilia, who declare that you love God,
You know who said that: then, desire my love,
Yield me contentment and be ruled aright!"
She sits up, she lies down, she comes and goes,
Kneels at the couch-side, overleans the sill
O' the window, cold and pale and mute as stone,

Strong as stone also. "Well, are they not fled? 1310
Am I not left, am I not one for all?
Speak a word, drop a tear, detach a glance,
Bless me or curse me of your own accord!
Is it the ceiling only wants your soul,
Is worth your eyes?" And then the eyes descend,
And do look at me. Is it at the meal?
"Speak!" she obeys, "Be silent!" she obeys,
Counting the minutes till I cry "Depart,"
As brood-bird when you saunter past her eggs.
Departs she? just the same through door and wall 1320
I see the same stone strength of white despair.
And all this will be never otherwise!
Before, the parents' presence lent her life:
She could play off her sex's armory,
Entreat, reproach, be female to my male,
Try all the shrieking doubles of the hare,
Go clamor to the Commissary, bid
The Archbishop hold my hands and stop my tongue,
And yield fair sport so: but the tactics change,
The hare stands stock-still to enrage the hound! 1330
Since that day when she learned she was no child
Of those she thought her parents, — that their trick
Had tricked me whom she thought sole trickster late, —
Why, I suppose she said within herself
"Then, no more struggle for my parents' sake!
And, for my own sake, why needs struggle be?"
But is there no third party to the pact?
What of her husband's relish or dislike
For this new game of giving up the game,
This worst offence of not offending more? 1340
I 'll not believe but instinct wrought in this,
Set her on to conceive and execute
The preferable plague: how sure they probe —

These jades, the sensitivest soft of man !
The long black hair was wound now in a wisp,
Crowned sorrow better than the wild web late :
No more soiled dress, 't is trimness triumphs now,
For how should malice go with negligence ?
The frayed silk looked the fresher for her spite !
There was an end to springing out of bed,
Praying me, with face buried on my feet,
Be hindered of my pastime, — so an end
To my rejoinder, " What, on the ground at last ?
Vanquished in fight, a supplicant for life ?
What if I raise you ? 'Ware the casting down
When next you fight me ! " Then, she lay there, mine :
Now, mine she is if I please wring her neck, —
A moment of disquiet, working eyes,
Protruding tongue, a long sigh, then no more, —
As if one killed the horse one could not ride !
Had I enjoined " Cut off the hair ! " — why, snap
The scissors, and at once a yard or so
Had fluttered in black serpents to the floor :
But till I did enjoin it, how she combs,
Uncurls and draws out to the complete length,
Plaits, places the insulting rope on head
To be an eyesore past dishevelment !
Is all done ? Then sit still again and stare !
I advise — no one think to bear that look
Of steady wrong, endured as steadily
— Through what sustainment of deluding hope ?
Who is the friend i' the background that notes all ?
Who may come presently and close accounts ?
This self-possession to the uttermost,
How does it differ in aught, save degree,
From the terrible patience of God ?

"All which just means,
She did not love you!" Again the word is launched
And the fact fronts me! What, you try the wards
With the true key and the dead lock flies ope?
No, it sticks fast and leaves you fumbling still!
You have some fifty servants, Cardinal, —
Which of them loves you? Which subordinate
But makes parade of such officiousness
That, — if there 's no love prompts it, — love, the sham,
Does twice the service done by love, the true?
God bless us liars, where 's one touch of truth
In what we tell the world, or world tells us,
Of how we love each other? All the same,
We calculate on word and deed, nor err, —
Bid such a man do such a loving act,
Sure of effect and negligent of cause,
Just as we bid a horse, with cluck of tongue,
Stretch his legs arch-wise, crouch his saddled back
To foot-reach of the stirrup — all for love,
And some for memory of the smart of switch
On the inside of the foreleg — what care we?
Yet where 's the bond obliges horse to man
Like that which binds fast wife to husband? God
Laid down the law: gave man the brawny arm
And ball of fist — woman the beardless cheek
And proper place to suffer in the side:
Since it is he can strike, let her obey!
Can she feel no love? Let her show the more,
Sham the worse, damn herself praiseworthily!
Who 's that soprano, Rome went mad about
Last week while I lay rotting in my straw?
The very jailer gossiped in his praise —
How, — dressed up like Armida, though a man;
And painted to look pretty, though a fright, —

He still made love so that the ladies swooned,
Being an eunuch. "Ah, Rinaldo mine!
But to breathe by thee while Jove slays us both!"
All the poor bloodless creature never felt,
Si, do, re, mi, fa, squeak and squall — for what?
Two gold zecchines the evening. Here 's my slave,
Whose body and soul depend upon my nod,
Can't falter out the first note in the scale
For her life! Why blame me if I take the life?
All women cannot give men love, forsooth!
No, nor all pullets lay the henwife eggs —
Whereat she bids them remedy the fault,
Brood on a chalk-ball: soon the nest is stocked —
Otherwise, to the plucking and the spit!
This wife of mine was of another mood —
Would not begin the lie that ends with truth,
Nor feign the love that brings real love about:
Wherefore I judged, sentenced and punished her.
But why particularize, defend the deed?
Say that I hated her for no one cause
Beyond my pleasure so to do, — what then?
Just on as much incitement acts the world,
All of you! Look and like! You favor one,
Browbeat another, leave alone a third, —
Why should you master natural caprice?
Pure nature! Try: plant elm by ash in file;
Both unexceptionable trees enough,
They ought to overlean each other, pair
At top, and arch across the avenue
The whole path to the pleasaunce: do they so —
Or loathe, lie off abhorrent each from each?
Lay the fault elsewhere: since we must have faults,
Mine shall have been, — seeing there 's ill in the end
Come of my course, — that I fare somehow worse

For the way I took: my fault . . . as God 's my judge,
I see not where my fault lies, that 's the truth!
I ought . . . oh, ought in my own interest
Have let the whole adventure go untried,
This chance by marriage: or else, trying it,
Ought to have turned it to account, some one
O' the hundred otherwises? Ay, my friend,
Easy to say, easy to do: step right
Now you 've stepped left and stumbled on the thing,
— The red thing! Doubt I any more than you
That practice makes man perfect? Give again
The chance, — same marriage and no other wife,
Be sure I 'll edify you! That 's because
I 'm practised, grown fit guide for Guido's self.
You proffered guidance, — I know, none so well, —
You laid down law and rolled decorum out,
From pulpit-corner on the gospel-side, —
Wanted to make your great experience mine,
Save me the personal search and pains so: thanks!
Take your word on life's use? When I take his —
The muzzled ox that treadeth out the corn,
Gone blind in padding round and round one path, —
As to the taste of green grass in the field!
What do you know o' the world that 's trodden flat
And salted sterile with your daily dung,
Leavened into a lump of loathsomeness?
Take your opinion of the modes of life,
The aims of life, life's triumph or defeat,
How to feel, how to scheme, and how to do
Or else leave undone? You preached long and loud
On high-days, " Take our doctrine upon trust!
Into the mill-house with you! Grind our corn,
Relish our chaff, and let the green grass grow! "
I tried chaff, found I famished on such fare,

So made this mad rush at the mill-house-door,
Buried my head up to the ears in dew,
Browsed on the best: for which you brain me, Sirs!
Be it so. I conceived of life that way,
And still declare — life, without absolute use
Of the actual sweet therein, is death, not life.
Give me, — pay down, — not promise, which is air,—
Something that 's out of life and better still,
Make sure reward, make certain punishment,
Entice me, scare me, — I 'll forgo this life;
Otherwise, no! — the less that words, mere wind,
Would cheat me of some minutes while they plague,
Balk fulness of revenge here, — blame yourselves
For this eruption of the pent-up soul
You prisoned first and played with afterward!
"Deny myself" meant simply pleasure you,
The sacred and superior, save the mark!
You, — whose stupidity and insolence
I must defer to, soothe at every turn, —
Whose swine-like snuffling greed and grunting lust
I had to wink at or help gratify, —
While the same passions, — dared they perk in me,
Me, the immeasurably marked, by God,
Master of the whole world of such as you, —
I, boast such passions? 'T was "Suppress them straight!
Or stay, we 'll pick and choose before destroy.
Here 's wrath in you, a serviceable sword, —
Beat it into a ploughshare! What 's this long
Lance-like ambition? Forge a pruning-hook,
May be of service when our vines grow tall!
But — sword use swordwise, spear thrust out as spear?
Anathema! Suppression is the word!"
My nature, when the outrage was too gross,

Widened itself an outlet over-wide
By way of answer, sought its own relief
With more of fire and brimstone than you wished.
All your own doing: preachers, blame yourselves!

'T is I preach while the hour-glass runs and runs!
God keep me patient! All I say just means —
My wife proved, whether by her fault or mine, —
That 's immaterial, — a true stumbling-block
I' the way of me her husband. I but plied
The hatchet yourselves use to clear a path,
Was politic, played the game you warrant wins,
Plucked at law's robe a-rustle through the courts,
Bowed down to kiss divinity's buckled shoe
Cushioned i' the church: efforts all wide the aim!
Procedures to no purpose! Then flashed truth.
The letter kills, the spirit keeps alive
In law and gospel: there be nods and winks
Instruct a wise man to assist himself
In certain matters, nor seek aid at all.
"Ask money of me," — quoth the clownish saw, —
"And take my purse! But, — speaking with respect, —
Need you a solace for the troubled nose?
Let everybody wipe his own himself!"
Sirs, tell me free and fair! Had things gone well
At the wayside inn: had I surprised asleep
The runaways, as was so probable,
And pinned them each to other partridge-wise,
Through back and breast to breast and back, then bade
Bystanders witness if the spit, my sword,
Were loaded with unlawful game for once —
Would you have interposed to damp the glow
Applauding me on every husband's cheek?
Would you have checked the cry "A judgment, see!

A warning, note! Be henceforth chaste, ye wives,
Nor stray beyond your proper precinct, priests!"
If you had, then your house against itself
Divides, nor stands your kingdom any more.
Oh why, why was it not ordained just so?
Why fell not things out so nor otherwise?
Ask that particular devil whose task it is
To trip the all-but-at perfection, — slur
The line of the painter just where paint leaves off
And life begin, — put ice into the ode
O' the poet while he cries "Next stanza — fire!"
Inscribe all human effort with one word,
Artistry's haunting curse, the Incomplete!
Being incomplete, my act escaped success.
Easy to blame now! Every fool can swear
To hole in net that held and slipped the fish.
But, treat my act with fair unjaundiced eye,
What was there wanting to a masterpiece
Except the luck that lies beyond a man?
My way with the woman, now proved grossly wrong,
Just missed of being gravely grandly right
And making mouths laugh on the other side.
Do, for the poor obstructed artist's sake,
Go with him over that spoiled work once more!
Take only its first flower, the ended act
Now in the dusty pod, dry and defunct!
I march to the Villa, and my men with me,
That evening, and we reach the door and stand.
I say . . . no, it shoots through me lightning-like
While I pause, breathe, my hand upon the latch,
"Let me forebode! Thus far, too much success:
I want the natural failure — find it where?
Which thread will have to break and leave a loop
I' the meshy combination, my brain's loom

Wove this long while, and now next minute tests ?
Of three that are to catch, two should go free,
One must : all three surprised, — impossible !
Beside, I seek three and may chance on six, —
This neighbor, t' other gossip, — the babe's birth
Brings such to fireside, and folks give them wine, —
'T is late : but when I break in presently
One will be found outlingering the rest
For promise of a posset, — one whose shout
Would raise the dead down in the catacombs,
Much more the city-watch that goes its round.
When did I ever turn adroitly up
To sun some brick embedded in the soil,
And with one blow crush all three scorpions there ?
Or Pietro or Violante shambles off —
It cannot be but I surprise my wife —
If only she is stopped and stamped on, good !
That shall suffice : more is improbable.
Now I may knock ! " And this once for my sake
The impossible was effected : I called king,
Queen and knave in a sequence, and cards came,
All three, three only ! So, I had my way,
Did my deed : so, unbrokenly lay bare
Each tænia that had sucked me dry of juice,
At last outside me, not an inch of ring
Left now to writhe about and root itself
I' the heart all powerless for revenge ! Henceforth
I might thrive : these were drawn and dead and damned.
Oh Cardinal, the deep long sigh you heave
When the load 's off you, ringing as it runs
All the way down the serpent-stair to hell !
No doubt the fine delirium flustered me,
Turned my brain with the influx of success
As if the sole need now were to wave wand

And find doors fly wide, — wish and have my will, —
The rest o' the scheme would care for itself: escape
Easy enough were that, and poor beside!
It all but proved so, — ought to quite have proved,
Since, half the chances had sufficed, set free
Anyone, with his senses at command,
From thrice the danger of my flight. But, drunk,
Redundantly triumphant, — some reverse
Was sure to follow! There 's no other way
Accounts for such prompt perfect failure then
And there on the instant. Any day o' the week,
A ducat slid discreetly into palm
O' the mute post-master, while you whisper him —
How you the Count and certain four your knaves,
Have just been mauling who was malapert,
Suspect the kindred may prove troublesome,
Therefore, want horses in a hurry, — that
And nothing more secures you any day
The pick o' the stable! Yet I try the trick,
Double the bribe, call myself Duke for Count,
And say the dead man only was a Jew,
And for my pains find I am dealing just
With the one scrupulous fellow in all Rome —
Just this immaculate official stares,
Sees I want hat on head and sword in sheath,
Am splashed with other sort of wet than wine,
Shrugs shoulder, puts my hand by, gold and all,
Stands on the strictness of the rule o' the road!
" Where 's the Permission? " Where 's the wretched rag
With the due seal and sign of Rome's Police,
To be had for asking, half-an-hour ago?
" Gone? Get another, or no horses hence! "
He dares not stop me, we five glare too grim.

But hinders, — hacks and hamstrings sure enough,
Gives me some twenty miles of miry road
More to march in the middle of that night
Whereof the rough beginning taxed the strength
O' the youngsters, much more mine, both soul and flesh,
Who had to think as well as act: dead-beat,
We gave in ere we reached the boundary
And safe spot out of this irrational Rome, —
Where, on dismounting from our steeds next day,
We had snapped our fingers at you, safe and sound,
Tuscans once more in blessed Tuscany,
Where laws make wise allowance, understand
Civilized life and do its champions right!
Witness the sentence of the Rota there,
Arezzo uttered, the Granduke confirmed,
One week before I acted on its hint, —
Giving friend Guillichini, for his love,
The galleys, and my wife your saint, Rome's saint, —
Rome manufactures saints enough to know, —
Seclusion at the Stinche for her life.
All this, that all but was, might all have been,
Yet was not! balked by just a scrupulous knave
Whose palm was horn through handling horses' hoofs
And could not close upon my proffered gold!
What say you to the spite of fortune? Well,
The worst 's in store: thus hindered, haled this way
To Rome again by hangdogs, whom find I
Here, still to fight with, but my pale frail wife?
— Riddled with wounds by one not like to waste
The blows he dealt, — knowing anatomy, —
(I think I told you) bound to pick and choose
The vital parts! 'T was learning all in vain!
She too must shimmer through the gloom o' the grave,
Come and confront me — not at judgment-seat

Where I could twist her soul, as erst her flesh,
And turn her truth into a lie, — but there,
O' the death-bed, with God's hand between us both,
Striking me dumb, and helping her to speak,
Tell her own story her own way, and turn
My plausibility to nothingness !
Four whole days did Pompilia keep alive,
With the best surgery of Rome agape
At the miracle, — this cut, the other slash,
And yet the life refusing to dislodge,
Four whole extravagant impossible days,
Till she had time to finish and persuade
Every man, every woman, every child
In Rome, of what she would : the selfsame she
Who, but a year ago, had wrung her hands,
Reddened her eyes and beat her breasts, rehearsed
The whole game at Arezzo, nor availed
Thereby to move one heart or raise one hand !
When destiny intends you cards like these,
What good of skill and preconcerted play ?
Had she been found dead, as I left her dead,
I should have told a tale brooked no reply :
You scarcely will suppose me found at fault
With that advantage ! " What brings me to Rome ?
Necessity to claim and take my wife :
Better, to claim and take my new-born babe, —
Strong in paternity a fortnight old,
When 't is at strongest : warily I work,
Knowing the machinations of my foe ;
I have companionship and use the night :
I seek my wife and child, — I find — no child
But wife, in the embraces of that priest
Who caused her to elope from me. These two,
Backed by the pander-pair who watch the while

Spring on me like so many tiger-cats,
Glad of the chance to end the intruder. I —
What should I do but stand on my defence,
Strike right, strike left, strike thick and threefold, slay,
Not all — because the coward priest escapes.
Last, I escape, in fear of evil tongues,
And having had my taste of Roman law."
What 's disputable, refutable here? —
Save by just this one ghost-thing half on earth,
Half out of it, — as if she held God's hand
While she leant back and looked her last at me,
Forgiving me (here monks begin to weep)
Oh, from her very soul, commending mine
To heavenly mercies which are infinite, —
While fixing fast my head beneath your knife!
'T is fate not fortune. All is of a piece!
When was it chance informed me of my youths?
My rustic four o' the family, soft swains,
What sweet surprise had they in store for me,
Those of my very household, — what did Law
Twist with her rack-and-cord-contrivance late
From out their bones and marrow? What but this —
Had no one of these several stumbling-blocks
Stopped me, they yet were cherishing a scheme,
All of their honest country homespun wit,
To quietly next day at crow of cock
Cut my own throat too, for their own behoof,
Seeing I had forgot to clear accounts
O' the instant, nowise slackened speed for that, —
And somehow never might find memory,
Once safe back in Arezzo, where things change,
And a court-lord needs mind no country lout.
Well, being the arch-offender, I die last, —
May, ere my head falls, have my eyesight free,

Nor miss them dangling high on either hand,
Like scarecrows in a hemp-field, for their pains !

And then my Trial, — 't is my Trial that bites
Like a corrosive, so the cards are packed,
Dice loaded, and my life-stake tricked away !
Look at my lawyers, lacked they grace of law,
Latin or logic ? Were not they fools to the height,
Fools to the depth, fools to the level between,
O' the foolishness set to decide the case ?
They feign, they flatter ; nowise does it skill,
Everything goes against me : deal each judge
His dole of flattery and feigning, — why,
He turns and tries and snuffs and savors it,
As some old fly the sugar-grain, your gift ;
Then eyes your thumb and finger, brushes clean
The absurd old head of him, and whisks away,
Leaving your thumb and finger dirty. Faugh !

And finally, after this long-drawn range
Of affront and failure, failure and affront, —
This path, 'twixt crosses leading to a skull,
Paced by me barefoot, bloodied by my palms
From the entry to the end, — there 's light at length,
A cranny of escape : appeal may be
To the old man, to the father, to the Pope,
For a little life — from one whose life is spent,
A little pity — from pity's source and seat,
A little indulgence to rank, privilege,
From one who is the thing personified,
Rank, privilege, indulgence, grown beyond
Earth's bearing, even, ask Jansenius else !
Still the same answer, still no other tune
From the cicala perched at the tree-top

Than crickets noisy round the root: 't is "Die!"
Bids Law — "Be damned!" adds Gospel, — nay,
No word so frank, — 't is rather, "Save yourself!"
The Pope subjoins — "Confess and be absolved!
So shall my credit countervail your shame,
And the world see I have not lost the knack
Of trying all the spirits: yours, my son,
Wants but a fiery washing to emerge
In clarity! Come, cleanse you, ease the ache
Of these old bones, refresh our bowels, boy!"
Do I mistake your mission from the Pope?
Then, bear his Holiness the mind of me!
I do get strength from being thrust to wall,
Successively wrenched from pillar and from post
By this tenacious hate of fortune, hate
Of all things in, under, and above earth.
Warfare, begun this mean unmanly mode,
Does best to end so, — gives earth spectacle
Of a brave fighter who succumbs to odds
That turn defeat to victory. Stab, I fold
My mantle round me! Rome approves my act:
Applauds the blow which costs me life but keeps
My honor spotless: Rome would praise no more
Had I fallen, say, some fifteen years ago,
Helping Vienna when our Aretines
Flocked to Duke Charles and fought Turk Mustafa;
Nor would you two be trembling o'er my corpse
With all this exquisite solicitude.
Why is it that I make such suit to live?
The popular sympathy that 's round me now
Would break like bubble that o'er-domes a fly:
Solid enough while he lies quiet there,
But let him want the air and ply the wing,
Why, it breaks and bespatters him, what else?

Cardinal, if the Pope had pardoned me,
And I walked out of prison through the crowd,
It would not be your arm I should dare press!
Then, if I got safe to my place again,
How sad and sapless were the years to come!
I go my old ways and find things grown gray;
You priests leer at me, old friends look askance,
The mob 's in love, I 'll wager to a man,
With my poor young good beauteous murdered wife:
For hearts require instruction how to beat,
And eyes, on warrant of the story, wax
Wanton at portraiture in white and black
Of dead Pompilia gracing ballad-sheet,
Which eyes, lived she unmurdered and unsung,
Would never turn though she paced street as bare
As the mad penitent ladies do in France.
My brothers quietly would edge me out
Of use and management of things called mine;
Do I command? "You stretched command before!"
Show anger? "Anger little helped you once!"
Advise? "How manage you affairs of old?"
My very mother, all the while they gird,
Turns eye up, gives confirmatory groan;
For unsuccess, explain it how you will,
Disqualifies you, makes you doubt yourself,
— Much more, is found decisive by your friends.
Beside, am I not fifty years of age?
What new leap would a life take, checked like mine,
I' the spring at outset? Where 's my second chance?
Ay, but the babe . . . I had forgot my son,
My heir! Now for a burst of gratitude!
There 's some appropriate service to intone,
Some *gaudeamus* and thanksgiving-psalm!
Old, I renew my youth in him, and poor

Possess a treasure, — is not that the phrase?
Only I must wait patient twenty years —
Nourishing all the while, as father ought,
The excrescence with my daily blood of life.
Does it respond to hope, such sacrifice, —
Grows the wen plump while I myself grow lean?
Why, here 's my son and heir in evidence,
Who stronger, wiser, handsomer than I
By fifty years, relieves me of each load, —
Tames my hot horse, carries my heavy gun,
Courts my coy mistress, — has his apt advice
On house-economy, expenditure,
And what not. All which good gifts and great growth
Because of my decline, he brings to bear
On Guido, but half apprehensive how
He cumbers earth, crosses the brisk young Count,
Who civilly would thrust him from the scene.
Contrariwise, does the blood-offering fail?
There 's an ineptitude, one blank the more
Added to earth in semblance of my child?
Then, this has been a costly piece of work,
My life exchanged for his! — why he, not I,
Enjoy the world, if no more grace accrue?
Dwarf me, what giant have you made of him?
I do not dread the disobedient son:
I know how to suppress rebellion there,
Being not quite the fool my father was.
But grant the medium measure of a man,
The usual compromise 'twixt fool and sage,
— You know — the tolerably-obstinate,
The not-so-much-perverse but you may train,
The true son-servant that, when parent bids
"Go work, son, in my vineyard!" makes reply
"I go, Sir!" — Why, what profit in your son

Beyond the drudges you might subsidize,
Have the same work from, at a paul the head?
Look at those four young precious olive-plants
Reared at Vittiano, — not on flesh and blood,
These twenty years, but black bread and sour wine!
I bade them put forth tender branch, hook, hold,
And hurt three enemies I had in Rome:
They did my hest as unreluctantly,
At promise of a dollar, as a son
Adjured by mumping memories of the past.
No, nothing repays youth expended so —
Youth, I say, who am young still: grant but leave
To live my life out, to the last I 'd live
And die conceding age no right of youth!
It is the will runs the renewing nerve
Through flaccid flesh that faints before the time.
Therefore no sort of use for son have I —
Sick, not of life's feast but of steps to climb
To the house where life prepares her feast, — of means
To the end: for make the end attainable
Without the means, — my relish were like yours.
A man may have an appetite enough
For a whole dish of robins ready cooked,
And yet lack courage to face sleet, pad snow,
And snare sufficiently for supper.

Thus
The time's arrived when, ancient Roman-like,
I am bound to fall on my own sword: why not
Say — Tuscan-like, more ancient, better still?
Will you hear truth can do no harm nor good?
I think I never was at any time
A Christian, as you nickname all the world,
Me among others: truce to nonsense now!

Name me, a primitive religionist —
As should the aboriginary be
I boast myself, Etruscan, Aretine,
One sprung, — your frigid Virgil's fieriest word, —
From fauns and nymphs, trunks and the heart of oak,
With, — for a visible divinity, —
The portent of a Jove Ægiochus
Descried 'mid clouds, lightning and thunder, couched
On topmost crag of your Capitoline:
'T is in the Seventh Æneid, — what, the Eighth?
Right, — thanks, Abate, — though the Christian's dumb.
The Latinist 's vivacious in you yet!
I know my grandsire had our tapestry
Marked with the motto, 'neath a certain shield,
Whereto his grandson presently will give gules
To vary azure. First we fight for faiths,
But get to shake hands at the last of all:
Mine 's your faith too, — in Jove Ægiochus!
Nor do Greek gods, that serve as supplement,
Jar with the simpler scheme, if understood.
We want such intermediary race
To make communication possible;
The real thing were too lofty, we too low,
Midway hang these: we feel their use so plain
In linking height to depth, that we doff hat
And put no question nor pry narrowly
Into the nature hid behind the names.
We grudge no rite the fancy may demand;
But never, more than needs, invent, refine,
Improve upon requirement, idly wise
Beyond the letter, teaching gods their trade,
Which is to teach us: we 'll obey when taught.
Why should we do our duty past the need?
When the sky darkens, Jove is wroth, — say prayer!

When the sun shines and Jove is glad, — sing psalm!
But wherefore pass prescription and devise
Blood-offering for sweat-service, lend the rod
A pungency through pickle of our own?
Learned Abate, — no one teaches you
What Venus means and who's Apollo here!
I spare you, Cardinal, — but, though you wince,
You know me, I know you, and both know that!
So, if Apollo bids us fast, we fast,
But where does Venus order we stop sense
When Master Pietro rhymes a pleasantry?
Give alms prescribed on Friday: but, hold hand
Because your foe lies prostrate, — where's the word
Explicit in the book debars revenge?
The rationale of your scheme is just
"Pay toll here, there pursue your pleasure free!"
So do you turn to use the medium-powers,
Mars and Minerva, Bacchus and the rest,
And so are saved propitiating — whom?
What all-good, all-wise and all-potent Jove
Vexed by the very sins in man, himself
Made life's necessity when man he made?
Irrational bunglers! So, the living truth
Revealed to strike Pan dead, ducks low at last,
Prays leave to hold its own and live good days
Provided it go masque grotesquely, called
Christian not Pagan. Oh, you purged the sky
Of all gods save the One, the great and good,
Clapped hands and triumphed! But the change came fast:
The inexorable need in man for life —
(Life, you may mulct and minish to a grain
Out of the lump, so that the grain but live)
Laughed at your substituting death for life,
And bade you do your worst: which worst was done

In just that age styled primitive and pure
When Saint this, Saint that, dutifully starved,
Froze, fought with beasts, was beaten and abused
And finally ridded of his flesh by fire,
He kept life-long unspotted from the world!
Next age, how goes the game, what mortal gives
His life and emulates Saint that, Saint this?
Men mutter, make excuse or mutiny,
In fine are minded all to leave the new,
Stick to the old, — enjoy old liberty,
No prejudice in enjoyment, if you please,
To the new profession: sin o' the sly, henceforth!
The law stands though the letter kills: what then?
The spirit saves as unmistakably.
Omniscience sees, Omnipotence could stop,
Omnibenevolence pardons: it must be,
Frown law its fiercest, there 's a wink somewhere!

Such was the logic in this head of mine:
I, like the rest, wrote "poison" on my bread,
But broke and ate: — said "Those that use the sword
Shall perish by the same;" then stabbed my foe.
I stand on solid earth, not empty air:
Dislodge me, let your Pope's crook hale me hence!
Not he, nor you! And I so pity both,
I 'll make the true charge you want wit to make:
"Count Guido, who reveal our mystery,
And trace all issues to the love of life:
We having life to love and guard, like you,
Why did you put us upon self-defence?
You well knew what prompt pass-word would appease
The sentry's ire when folk infringed his bounds,
And yet kept mouth shut: do you wonder then
If, in mere decency, he shot you dead?

He can't have people play such pranks as yours
Beneath his nose at noonday : you disdained
To give him an excuse before the world
By crying 'I break rule to save our camp !'
Under the old rule, such offence were death ;
And you had heard the Pontifex pronounce
'Since you slay foe and violate the form,
Slaying turns murder, which were sacrifice
Had you, while, say, law-suiting foe to death,
But raised an altar to the Unknown God
Or else the Genius of the Vatican.'
Why then this pother ? — all because the Pope,
Doing his duty, cried 'A foreigner,
You scandalize the natives : here at Rome
Romano vivitur more : wise men, here,
Put the Church forward and efface themselves.
The fit defence had been, — you stamped on wheat,
Intending all the time to trample tares, —
Were fain extirpate, then, the heretic,
You now find, in your haste was slain a fool :
Nor Pietro, nor Violante, nor your wife
Meant to breed up your babe a Molinist !
Whence you are duly contrite. Not one word
Of all this wisdom did you urge : which slip
Death must atone for.' ''
So, let death atone !
So ends mistake, so ends mistakers ! — end
Perhaps to recommence, — how should I know ?
Only, be sure, no punishment, no pain
Childish, preposterous, impossible,
But some such fate as Ovid could foresee, —
Byblis in fluvium, let the weak soul end
In water, *sed Lycaon in lupum*, but
The strong become a wolf for evermore !

Change that Pompilia to a puny stream
Fit to reflect the daisies on its bank!
Let me turn wolf, be whole, and sate, for once, —
Wallow in what is now a wolfishness
Coerced too much by the humanity
That 's half of me as well! Grow out of man,
Glut the wolf-nature, — what remains but grow
Into the man again, be man indeed
And all man? Do I ring the changes right?
Deformed, transformed, reformed, informed, conformed!
The honest instinct, pent and crossed through life,
Let surge by death into a visible flow
Of rapture: as the strangled thread of flame
Painfully winds, annoying and annoyed,
Malignant and maligned, thro' stone and ore,
Till earth exclude the stranger: vented once,
It finds full play, is recognized a-top
Some mountain as no such abnormal birth,
Fire for the mount, not streamlet for the vale!
Ay, of the water was that wife of mine —
Be it for good, be it for ill, no run
O' the red thread through that insignificance!
Again, how she is at me with those eyes!
Away with the empty stare! Be holy still,
And stupid ever! Occupy your patch
Of private snow that 's somewhere in what world
May now be growing icy round your head,
And aguish at your foot-print, — freeze not me,
Dare follow not another step I take,
Not with so much as those detested eyes,
No, though they follow but to pray me pause
On the incline, earth's edge that 's next to hell!
None of your abnegation of revenge!

Fly at me frank, tug while I tear again!
There 's God, go tell Him, testify your worst!
Not she! There was no touch in her of hate:
And it would prove her hell, if I reached mine!
To know I suffered, would still sadden her,
Do what the angels might to make amends!
Therefore there 's either no such place as hell,
Or thence shall I be thrust forth, for her sake,
And thereby undergo three hells, not one —
I who, with outlet for escape to heaven,
Would tarry if such flight allowed my foe
To raise his head, relieved of that firm foot
Had pinned him to the fiery pavement else!
So am I made, "who did not make myself:"
(How dared she rob my own lip of the word?)
Beware me in what other world may be! —
Pompilia, who have brought me to this pass!
All I know here, will I say there, and go
Beyond the saying with the deed. Some use
There cannot but be for a mood like mine,
Implacable, persistent in revenge.
She maundered "All is over and at end:
I go my own road, go you where God will!
Forgive you? I forget you!" There 's the saint
That takes your taste, you other kind of men!
How you had loved her! Guido wanted skill
To value such a woman at her worth!
Properly the instructed criticize
"What 's here, you simpleton have tossed to take
Its chance i' the gutter? This a daub, indeed?
Why, 't is a Rafael that you kicked to rags!"
Perhaps so: some prefer the pure design:
Give me my gorge of color, glut of gold
In a glory round the Virgin made for me!

Titian 's the man, not Monk Angelico
Who traces you some timid chalky ghost
That turns the church into a charnel : ay,
Just such a pencil might depict my wife !
She, — since she, also, would not change herself, —
Why could not she come in some heart-shaped cloud,
Rainbowed about with riches, royalty
Rimming her round, as round the tintless lawn
Guardingly runs the selvage cloth of gold ?
I would have left the faint fine gauze untouched,
Needle-worked over with its lily and rose,
Let her bleach unmolested in the midst,
Chill that selected solitary spot
Of quietude she pleased to think was life.
Purity, pallor grace the lawn no doubt
When there 's the costly bordure to unthread
And make again an ingot : but what 's grace
When you want meat and drink and clothes and fire ?
A tale comes to my mind that 's apposite —
Possibly true, probably false, a truth
Such as all truths we live by Cardinal !
'T is said, a certain ancestor of mine
Followed — whoever was the potentate,
To Paynimrie, and in some battle, broke
Through more than due allowance of the foe,
And, risking much his own life, saved the lord's.
Battered and bruised, the Emperor scrambles up,
Rubs his eyes and looks round and sees my sire,
Picks a furze-sprig from out his hauberk-joint,
(Token how near the ground went majesty)
And says " Take this, and if thou get safe home,
Plant the same in thy garden-ground to grow :
Run thence an hour in a straight line, and stop :
Describe a circle round (for central point)

The furze aforesaid, reaching every way
The length of that hour's run: I give it thee,—
The central point, to build a castle there,
The space circumjacent, for fit demesne,
The whole to be thy children's heritage;—
Whom, for thy sake, bid thou wear furze on cap!"
Those are my arms: we turned the furze a tree
To show more, and the greyhound tied thereto,
Straining to start, means swift and greedy both;
He stands upon a triple mount of gold—
By Jove, then, he 's escaping from true gold
And trying to arrive at empty air!
Aha! the fancy never crossed my mind!
My father used to tell me, and subjoin
"As for the castle, that took wings and flew:
The broad lands,— why, to traverse them to-day
Scarce tasks my gouty feet, and in my prime
I doubt not I could stand and spit so far:
But for the furze, boy, fear no lack of that,
So long as fortune leaves one field to grub!
Wherefore, hurra for furze and loyalty!"
What may I mean, where may the lesson lurk?
"Do not bestow on man, by way of gift,
Furze without land for framework,— vaunt no grace
Of purity, no furze-sprig of a wife,
To me, i' the thick of battle for my bread,
Without some better dowry, — gold will do!"
No better gift than sordid muck? Yes, Sirs!
Many more gifts much better. Give them me!
O those Olimpias bold, those Biancas brave,
That brought a husband power worth Ormuz' wealth!
Cried "Thou being mine, why, what but thine am I?
Be thou to me law, right, wrong, heaven and hell!
Let us blend souls, blent, thou in me, to bid

Two bodies work one pleasure! What are these
Called king, priest, father, mother, stranger, friend?
They fret thee or they frustrate? Give the word —
Be certain they shall frustrate nothing more!
And who is this young florid foolishness
That holds thy fortune in his pigmy clutch,
Being a prince and potency, forsooth! —
He hesitates to let the trifle go?
Let me but seal up eye, sing ear to sleep
Sounder than Samson, — pounce thou on the prize
Shall slip from off my breast, and down couch-side,
And on to floor, and far as my lord's feet —
Where he stands in the shadow with the knife,
Waiting to see what Delilah dares do!
Is the youth fair? What is a man to me
Who am thy call-bird? Twist his neck — my dupe's, —
Then take the breast shall turn a breast indeed!"
Such women are there; and they marry whom?
Why, when a man has gone and hanged himself
Because of what he calls a wicked wife, —
See, if the very turpitude bemoaned
Prove not mere excellence the fool ignores!
His monster is perfection, — Circe, sent
Straight from the sun, with wand the idiot blames
As not an honest distaff to spin wool!
O thou Lucrezia, is it long to wait
Yonder where all the gloom is in a glow
With thy suspected presence? — virgin yet,
Virtuous again, in face of what 's to teach —
Sin unimagined, unimaginable, —
I come to claim my bride, — thy Borgia's self
Not half the burning bridegroom I shall be!
Cardinal, take away your crucifix!
Abate, leave my lips alone, — they bite!

Vainly you try to change what should not change,
And shall not. I have bared, you bathe my heart —
It grows the stonier for your saving dew!
You steep the substance, you would lubricate,
In waters that but touch to petrify!

You too are petrifactions of a kind:
Move not a muscle that shows mercy. Rave
Another twelve hours, every word were waste!
I thought you would not slay impenitence,
But teased, from men you slew, contrition first, —
I thought you had a conscience. Cardinal,
You know I am wronged! — wronged, say, and wronged, maintain.
Was this strict inquisition made for blood
When first you showed us scarlet on your back,
Called to the College? Your straightforward way
To your legitimate end, — I think it passed
Over a scantling of heads brained, hearts broke,
Lives trodden into dust! How otherwise?
Such was the way o' the world, and so you walked.
Does memory haunt your pillow? Not a whit.
God wills you never pace your garden-path,
One appetizing hour ere dinner-time,
But your intrusion there treads out of life
A universe of happy innocent things:
Feel you remorse about that damsel-fly
Which buzzed so near your mouth and flapped your face?
You blotted it from being at a blow:
It was a fly, you were a man, and more,
Lord of created things, so took your course.
Manliness, mind, — these are things fit to save,
Fit to brush fly from: why, because I take

My course, must needs the Pope kill me? — kill you!
You! for this instrument, he throws away,
Is strong to serve a master, and were yours
To have and hold and get much good from out!
The Pope who dooms me needs must die next year;
I'll tell you how the chances are supposed
For his successor: first the Chamberlain,
Old San Cesario, — Colloredo, next, —
Then, one, two, three, four, I refuse to name;
After these, comes Altieri; then come you —
Seventh on the list you come, unless . . . ha, ha,
How can a dead hand give a friend a lift?
Are you the person to despise the help
O' the head shall drop in pannier presently?
So a child seesaws on or kicks away
The fulcrum-stone that 's all the sage requires
To fit his lever to and move the world.
Cardinal, I adjure you in God's name,
Save my life, fall at the Pope's feet, set forth
Things your own fashion, not in words like these
Made for a sense like yours who apprehend!
Translate into the Court-conventional
"Count Guido must not die, is innocent!
Fair, be assured! But what an he were foul,
Blood-drenched and murder-crested head to foot?
Spare one whose death insults the Emperor,
Nay, outrages the Louis you so love!
He has friends who will avenge him; enemies
Who will hate God now with impunity,
Missing the old coercive: would you send
A soul straight to perdition, dying frank
An atheist?" Go and say this, for God's sake!
— Why, you don't think I hope you 'll say one word?
Neither shall I persuade you from your stand

Nor you persuade me from my station: take
Your crucifix away, I tell you twice!

Come, I am tired of silence! Pause enough!
You have prayed: I have gone inside my soul
And shut its door behind me: 't is your torch
Makes the place dark: the darkness let alone
Grows tolerable twilight: one may grope
And get to guess at length and breadth and depth.
What is this fact I feel persuaded of —
This something like a foothold in the sea,
Although Saint Peter's bark scuds, billow-borne,
Leaves me to founder where it flung me first?
Spite of your splashing, I am high and dry!
God takes his own part in each thing He made;
Made for a reason, He conserves his work,
Gives each its proper instinct of defence.
My lamblike wife could neither bark nor bite,
She bleated, bleated, till for pity pure
The village roused up, ran with pole and prong
To the rescue, and behold the wolf's at bay!
Shall he try bleating? — or take turn or two,
Since the wolf owns some kinship with the fox,
And, failing to escape the foe by craft,
Give up attempt, die fighting quietly?
The last bad blow that strikes fire in at eye
And on to brain, and so out, life and all,
How can it but be cheated of a pang
If, fighting quietly, the jaws enjoy
One re-embrace in mid back-bone they break,
After their weary work thro' the foe's flesh?
That 's the wolf-nature. Don't mistake my trope!
A Cardinal so qualmish? Eminence,
My fight is figurative, blows i' the air,

Brain-war with powers and principalities,
Spirit-bravado, no real fisticuffs!
I shall not presently, when the knock comes,
Cling to this bench nor claw the hangman's face,
No, trust me! I conceive worse lots than mine.
Whether it be, the old contagious fit
And plague o' the prison have surprised me too,
The appropriate drunkenness of the death-hour
Crept on my sense, kind work o' the wine and myrrh, —
I know not, — I begin to taste my strength,
Careless, gay even. What 's the worth of life?
The Pope 's dead now, my murderous old man,
For Tozzi told me so: and you, forsooth —
Why, you don't think, Abate, do your best,
You 'll live a year more with that hacking cough
And blotch of crimson where the cheek 's a pit?
Tozzi has got you also down in book!
Cardinal, only seventh of seventy near,
Is not one called Albano in the lot?
Go eat your heart, you 'll never be a Pope!
Inform me, is it true you left your love,
A Pucci, for promotion in the church?
She 's more than in the church, — in the churchyard!
Plautilla Pucci, your affianced bride,
Has dust now in the eyes that held the love, —
And Martinez, suppose they make you Pope,
Stops that with *veto*, — so, enjoy yourself!
I see you all reel to the rock, you waves —
Some forthright, some describe a sinuous track,
Some, crested brilliantly, with heads above,
Some in a strangled swirl sunk who knows how,
But all bound whither the main-current sets,
Rockward, an end in foam for all of you!
What if I be o'ertaken, pushed to the front

By all you crowding smoother souls behind,
And reach, a minute sooner than was meant,
The boundary whereon I break to mist?
Go to! the smoothest safest of you all,
Most perfect and compact wave in my train,
Spite of the blue tranquillity above,
Spite of the breadth before of lapsing peace,
Where broods the halcyon and the fish leaps free,
Will presently begin to feel the prick
At lazy heart, the push at torpid brain,
Will rock vertiginously in turn, and reel,
And, emulative, rush to death like me.
Later or sooner by a minute then,
So much for the untimeliness of death!
And, as regards the manner that offends,
The rude and rough, I count the same for gain.
Be the act harsh and quick! Undoubtedly
The soul's condensed and, twice itself, expands
To burst thro' life, by alternation due,
Into the other state whate'er it prove.
You never know what life means till you die:
Even throughout life, 't is death that makes life live,
Gives it whatever the significance.
For see, on your own ground and argument,
Suppose life had no death to fear, how find
A possibility of nobleness
In man, prevented daring any more?
What's love, what's faith without a worst to dread?
Lack-lustre jewelry! but faith and love
With death behind them bidding do or die —
Put such a foil at back, the sparkle 's born!
From out myself how the strange colors come!
Is there a new rule in another world?
Be sure I shall resign myself: as here

I recognized no law I could not see,
There, what I see, I shall acknowledge too:
On earth I never took the Pope for God,
In heaven I shall scarce take God for the Pope.
Unmanned, remanned: I hold it probable —
With something changeless at the heart of me
To know me by, some nucleus that 's myself:
Accretions did it wrong? Away with them —
You soon shall see the use of fire!

Till when,
All that was, is; and must forever be.
Nor is it in me to unhate my hates, —
I use up my last strength to strike once more
Old Pietro in the wine-house-gossip-face,
To trample underfoot the whine and wile
Of beast Violante, — and I grow one gorge
To loathingly reject Pompilia's pale
Poison my hasty hunger took for food.
A strong tree wants no wreaths about its trunk,
No cloying cups, no sickly sweet of scent,
But sustenance at root, a bucketful.
How else lived that Athenian who died so,
Drinking hot bull's blood, fit for men like me?
I lived and died a man, and take man's chance,
Honest and bold: right will be done to such.

Who are these you have let descend my stair?
Ha, their accursed psalm! Lights at the sill!
Is it "Open" they dare bid you? Treachery!
Sirs, have I spoken one word all this while
Out of the world of words I had to say?
Not one word! All was folly — I laughed and mocked!
Sirs, my first true word, all truth and no lie,

Is — save me notwithstanding! Life is all!
I was just stark mad, — let the madman live
Pressed by as many chains as you please pile!
Don't open! Hold me from them! I am yours,
I am the Granduke's — no, I am the Pope's!
Abate, — Cardinal, — Christ, — Maria, — God, . . .
Pompilia, will you let them murder me?

XII.

THE BOOK AND THE RING.

[In the concluding Book the last glimmerings of that vivid event — the Franceschini case — are traced as they pale out into the black oblivion of the centuries. First a letter is given from a Venetian traveller of rank, whose disposition is much the same as that of "Half-Rome." He relates the news in Rome and incidentally describes Guido's execution. Two letters follow from the lawyers, each of whom comments characteristically on the final steps and outcome of the case, while discreetly shifting sides a little, Guido's lawyer insinuating his clever policy in suffering the Pope to have his way, and Pompilia's lawyer, after indignantly quoting from a sermon by Pompilia's confessor, maintaining that he will soon show, when he undertakes the case for the convertite nuns against Pompilia's Will, how he proved Guido's guilt, but not Pompilia's innocence. In this sermon extract, which so excites Bottini's ire, Pompilia's purity and moral triumph over the equivocations of public opinion and legal pleading are represented. Finally the verdict appears, vindicating Pompilia, by warranting her son the enjoyment of his property; and the story closes as it began, with the Poet's word upon the relative falsity of fact and truth of art, and with the dedication of this work to companionship with that of his "Lyric Love."]

HERE were the end, had anything an end:
Thus, lit and launched, up and up roared and soared
A rocket, till the key o' the vault was reached
And wide heaven held, a breathless minute-space,

In brilliant usurpature: thus caught spark,
Rushed to the height, and hung at full of fame
Over men's upturned faces, ghastly thence,
Our glaring Guido: now decline must be.
In its explosion, you have seen his act,
By my power — may-be, judged it by your own, —
Or composite as good orbs prove, or crammed
With worse ingredients than the Wormwood Star.
The act, over and ended, falls and fades:
What was once seen, grows what is now described,
Then talked of, told about, a tinge the less
In every fresh transmission; till it melts,
Trickles in silent orange or wan gray
Across our memory, dies and leaves all dark,
And presently we find the stars again.
Follow the main streaks, meditate the mode
Of brightness, how it hastes to blend with black!

After that February Twenty-Two,
Since our salvation, Sixteen-Ninety-Eight,
Of all reports that were, or may have been,
Concerning those the day killed or let live,
Four I count only. Take the first that comes.
A letter from a stranger, man of rank,
Venetian visitor at Rome, — who knows,
On what pretence of busy idleness?
Thus he begins on evening of that day.

"Here are we at our end of Carnival;
Prodigious gayety and monstrous mirth,
And constant shift of entertaining show:
With influx, from each quarter of the globe,
Of strangers nowise wishful to be last
I' the struggle for a good place presently

When that befalls fate cannot long defer.
The old Pope totters on the verge o' the grave:
You see, Malpichi understood far more
Than Tozzi how to treat the ailments: age,
No question, renders these inveterate.
Cardinal Spada, actual Minister,
Is possible Pope; I wager on his head,
Since those four entertainments of his niece
Which set all Rome a-stare: Pope probably —
Though Colloredo has his backers too,
And San Cesario makes one doubt at times:
Altieri will be Chamberlain at most.

"A week ago the sun was warm like May,
And the old man took daily exercise
Along the river-side; he loves to see
That Custom-house he built upon the bank,
For, Naples born, his tastes are maritime:
But yesterday he had to keep in-doors
Because of the outrageous rain that fell.
On such days the good soul has fainting-fits,
Or lies in stupor, scarcely makes believe
Of minding business, fumbles at his beads.
They say, the trust that keeps his heart alive
Is that, by lasting till December next,
He may hold Jubilee a second time,
And, twice in one reign, ope the Holy Doors.
By the way, somebody responsible
Assures me that the King of France has writ
Fresh orders: Fénelon will be condemned:
The Cardinal makes a wry face enough,
Having a love for the delinquent: still,
He 's the ambassador, must press the point.
Have you a wager too, dependent here?

"Now, from such matters to divert awhile,
Hear of to-day's event which crowns the week,
Casts all the other wagers into shade.
Tell Dandolo I owe him fifty drops
Of heart's blood in the shape of gold zecchines!
The Pope has done his worst: I have to pay
For the execution of the Count, by Jove!
Two days since, I reported him as safe,
Re-echoing the conviction of all Rome:
Who could suspect its one deaf ear — the Pope's?
But prejudices grow insuperable,
And that old enmity to Austria, that
Passion for France and France's pageant-king
(Of which, why pause to multiply the proofs
Now scandalously rife in Europe's mouth?)
These fairly got the better in our man
Of justice, prudence, and *esprit de corps*,
And he persisted in the butchery.
Also, 't is said that in his latest walk
To that Dogana-by-the-Bank he built,
The crowd, — he suffers question, unrebuked, —
Asked, 'Whether murder was a privilege
Only reserved for nobles like the Count?'
And he was ever mindful of the mob.
Martinez, the Cæsarian Minister,
— Who used his best endeavors to spare blood,
And strongly pleaded for the life 'of one,'
Urged he, 'I may have dined at table with!' —
He will not soon forget the Pope's rebuff,
— Feels the slight sensibly, I promise you!
And but for the dissuasion of two eyes
That make with him foul weather or fine day,
He had abstained, nor graced the spectacle:
As it was, barely would he condescend

Look forth from the *palchetto* where he sat
Under the Pincian : we shall hear of this.
The substituting, too, the People's Square
For the out-o'-the-way old quarter by the Bridge,
Was meant as a conciliatory sop
To the mob ; it gave one holiday the more.
But the French Embassy might unfurl flag, —
Still the good luck of France to fling a foe !
Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly.
Palchetti were erected in the Place,
And houses, at the edge of the Three Streets,
Let their front windows at six dollars each :
Anguisciola, that patron of the arts,
Hired one ; our Envoy Contarini too.

" Now for the thing ; no sooner the decree
Gone forth, — 't is four-and-twenty hours ago, —
Than Acciaiuoli and Panciatichi,
Old friends, indeed compatriots of the man,
Being pitched on as the coupie properest
To intimate the sentence yesternight,
Were closeted ere cock-crow with the Count.
They both report their efforts to dispose
The unhappy nobleman for ending well,
Despite the natural sense of injury,
Were crowned at last with a complete success.
And when the Company of Death arrived
At twenty-hours, — the way they reckon here, —
We say, at sunset, after dinner-time, —
The Count was led down, hoisted up on car,
Last of the five, as heinousest, you know :
Yet they allowed one whole car to each man.
His intrepidity, nay, nonchalance,
As up he stood and down he sat himself,

Struck admiration into those who saw.
Then the procession started, took the way
From the New Prisons by the Pilgrim's Street,
The street of the Governo, Pasquin's Street,
(Where was stuck up, 'mid other epigrams,
A quatrain . . . but of all that, presently!)
The Place Navona, the Pantheon's Place,
Place of the Column, last the Corso's length,
And so debouched thence at Mannaia's foot
I' the Place o' the People. As is evident,
(Despite the malice, — plainly meant, I fear,
By this abrupt change of locality, —
The Square's no such bad place to head and hang)
We had the titillation as we sat
Assembled, (quality in conclave, ha?)
Of, minute after minute, some report
How the slow show was winding on its way.
Now did a car run over, kill a man,
Just opposite a pork-shop numbered Twelve:
And bitter were the outcries of the mob
Against the Pope: for, but that he forbids
The Lottery, why, Twelve were Tern Quatern!
Now did a beggar by Saint Agnes, lame
From his youth up, recover use of leg,
Through prayer of Guido as he glanced that way:
So that the crowd near crammed his hat with coin.
Thus was kept up excitement to the last,
— Not an abrupt out-bolting, as of yore,
From Castle, over Bridge and on to block,
And so all ended ere you well could wink!

"To mount the scaffold-steps, Guido was last
Here also, as atrociousest in crime.
We hardly noticed how the peasants died,

They dangled somehow soon to right and left,
And we remained all ears and eyes, could give
Ourselves to Guido undividedly,
As he harangued the multitude beneath.
He begged forgiveness on the part of God,
And fair construction of his act from men,
Whose suffrage he entreated for his soul,
Suggesting that we should forthwith repeat
A *Pater* and an *Ave*, with the hymn
Salve Regina Cœli, for his sake.
Which said, he turned to the confessor, crossed
And reconciled himself, with decency,
Oft glancing at Saint Mary's opposite,
Where they possess, and showed in shrine to-day,
The blessed *Umbilicus* of our Lord,
(A relic 't is believed no other church
In Rome can boast of) — then rose up, as brisk
Knelt down again, bent head, adapted neck,
And, with the name of Jesus on his lips,
Received the fatal blow.

"The headsman showed
The head to the populace. Must I avouch
We strangers own to disappointment here?
Report pronounced him fully six feet high,
Youngish, considering his fifty years,
And, if not handsome, dignified at least.
Indeed, it was no face to please a wife!
His friends say, this was caused by the costume:
He wore the dress he did the murder in,
That is, a *just-a-corps*, of russet serge,
Black camisole, coarse cloak of baracan
(So they style here the garb of goat's-hair cloth)
White hat and cotton cap beneath, poor Count,

Preservative against the evening dews
During the journey from Arezzo. Well,
So died the man, and so his end was peace;
Whence many a moral were to meditate.
Spada, — you may bet Dandolo, — is Pope!
Now for the quatrain!"

No, friend, this will do!
You've sputtered into sparks. What streak comes next?
A letter: Don Giacinto Arcangeli,
Doctor and Proctor, him I made you mark
Buckle to business in his study late,
The virtuous sire, the valiant for the truth,
Acquaints his correspondent, — Florentine,
By name Cencini, advocate as well,
Socius and brother-in-the-devil to match, —
A friend of Franceschini, anyhow,
And knit up with the bowels of the case, —
Acquaints him, (in this paper that I touch)
How their joint effort to obtain reprieve
For Guido had so nearly nicked the nine
And ninety and one over, — folk would say
At Tarocs, — or succeeded, — in our phrase.
To this Cencini's care I owe the Book,
The yellow thing I take and toss once more, —
How will it be, my four-years'-intimate,
When thou and I part company anon? —
'T was he, the "whole position of the case,"
Pleading and summary, were put before;
Discreetly in my Book he bound them all,
Adding some three epistles to the point.
Here is the first of these, part fresh as penned,
The sand, that dried the ink, not rubbed away,
Though penned the day whereof it tells the deed:

Part — extant just as plainly, you know where,
Whence came the other stuff, went, you know how,
To make the Ring that 's all but round and done.

"Late they arrived, too late, egregious Sir,
Those same justificative points you urge
Might benefit His Blessed Memory
Count Guido Franceschini now with God:
Since the Court, — to state things succinctly, — styled
The Congregation of the Governor,
Having resolved on Tuesday last our cause
I' the guilty sense, with death for punishment,
Spite of all pleas by me deducible
In favor of said Blessed Memory, —
I, with expenditure of pains enough,
Obtained a respite, leave to claim and prove
Exemption from the law's award, — alleged
The power and privilege o' the Clericate:
To which effect a courier was despatched.
But ere an answer from Arezzo came,
The Holiness of our Lord the Pope (prepare!)
Judging it inexpedient to postpone
The execution of such sentence passed,
Saw fit, by his particular cheirograph,
To derogate, dispense with privilege,
And wink at any hurt accruing thence
To Mother Church through damage of her son:
Also, to overpass and set aside
That other plea on score of tender age,
Put forth by me to do Pasquini good,
One of the four in trouble with our friend.
So that all five, to-day, have suffered death
With no distinction save in dying, — he,
Decollate by mere due of privilege,

The rest hanged decently and in order. Thus
Came the Count to his end of gallant man,
Defunct in faith and exemplarity :
Nor shall the shield of his great House lose shine
Thereby, nor its blue banner blush to red.
This, too, should yield sustainment to our hearts —
He had commiseration and respect
In his decease from universal Rome,
Quantum est hominum venustiorum,
The nice and cultivated everywhere :
Though, in respect of me his advocate,
Needs must I groan o'er my debility,
Attribute the untoward event o' the strife
To nothing but my own crass ignorance
Which failed to set the valid reasons forth,
Find fit excuse : such is the fate of war !
May God compensate us the direful blow
By future blessings on his family,
Whereof I lowly beg the next commands ;
— Whereto, as humbly, I confirm myself . . ."

And so forth, — follow name and place and date.
On next leaf —

" *Hactenus senioribus !*
There, old fox, show the clients t' other side
And keep this corner sacred, I beseech !
You and your pleas and proofs were what folk call
Pisan assistance, aid that comes too late,
Saves a man dead as nail in post of door.
Had I but time and space for narrative !
What was the good of twenty Clericates
When Somebody's thick headpiece once was bent
On seeing Guido's drop into the bag ?
How these old men like giving youth a push !

So much the better: next push goes to him,
And a new Pope begins the century.
Much good I get by my superb defence!
But argument is solid and subsists,
While obstinacy and ineptitude
Accompany the owner to his tomb —
What do I care how soon? Beside, folk see!
Rome will have relished heartily the show,
Yet understood the motives, never fear,
Which caused the indecent change o' the People's Place
To the People's Playground, — stigmatize the spite
Which in a trice precipitated things!
As oft the moribund will give a kick
To show they are not absolutely dead,
So feebleness i' the socket shoots its last,
A spirt of violence for energy!
But thou, Cencini, brother of my breast,
O fox whose home is 'mid the tender grape,
Whose couch in Tuscany by Themis' throne,
Subject to no such . . . best I shut my mouth
Or only open it again to say,
This pother and confusion fairly laid,
My hands are empty and my satchel lank.
Now then for both the Matrimonial Cause
And the Case of Gomez! Serve them hot and hot!

"Reliqua differamus in crastinum!
The impatient estafette cracks whip outside:
Still, though the earth should swallow him who swears
And me who make the mischief, in must slip —
My boy, your godson, fat-chaps Hyacinth,
Enjoyed the sight while Papa plodded here.
I promised him, the rogue, a month ago,
The day his birthday was, of all the days,

That if I failed to save Count Guido's head,
Cinuccio should at least go see it chopped
From trunk — 'So, latinize your thanks!' quoth I.
'That I prefer, *hoc malim*,' raps me out
The rogue: you notice the subjunctive? Ah!
Accordingly he sat there, bold in box,
Proud as the Pope behind the peacock-fans:
Whereon a certain lady-patroness
For whom I manage things (my boy in front,
Her Marquis sat the third in evidence;
Boys have no eyes nor ears save for the show)
'This time, Cintino,' was her sportive word,
When whiz and thump went axe and mowed lay man,
And folk could fall to the suspended chat,
'This time, you see, Bottini rules the roast,
Nor can Papa with all his eloquence
Be reckoned on to help as heretofore!'
Whereat Cinone pouts; then, sparkishly —
'Papa knew better than aggrieve his Pope,
And balk him of his grudge against our Count,
Else he'd have argued-off Bottini's' . . . what?
'His nose,' — the rogue! well parried of the boy!
He's long since out of Cæsar (eight years old)
And as for tripping in Eutropius . . . well,
Reason the more that we strain every nerve
To do him justice, mould a model-mouth,
A Bartolus-cum-Baldo for next age:
For that I purse the pieces, work the brain,
And want both Gomez and the marriage-case,
Success with which shall plaster aught of pate
That's broken in me by Bottini's flail,
And bruise his own, belike, that wags and brags.
Adverti supplico humiliter
Quod don't the fungus see, the fop divine

That one hand drives two horses, left and right?
With this rein did I rescue from the ditch
The fortune of our Franceschini, keep
Unsplashed the credit of a noble House,
And set the fashionable cause at Rome
A-prancing till bystanders shouted 'ware!'
The other rein's judicious management
Suffered old Somebody to keep the pace,
Hobblingly play the roadster: who but he
Had his opinion, was not led by the nose
In leash of quibbles strung to look like law!
You 'll soon see, — when I go to pay devoir
And compliment him on confuting me, —
If, by a back-swing of the pendulum,
Grace be not, thick and threefold, consequent.
'I must decide as I see proper, Don!
I 'm Pope, I have my inward lights for guide.
Had learning been the matter in dispute,
Could eloquence avail to gainsay fact,
Yours were the victory, be comforted!'
Cinuzzo will be gainer by it all.
Quick then with Gomez, hot and hot next case!"

Follows, a letter, takes the other side.
Tall blue-eyed Fisc whose head is capped with cloud,
Doctor Bottini, — to no matter who,
Writes on the Monday two days afterward.
Now shall the honest championship of right,
Crowned with success, enjoy at last, unblamed,
Moderate triumph! Now shall eloquence
Poured forth in fancied floods for virtue's sake,
(The print is sorrowfully dyked and dammed,
But shows where fain the unbridled force would flow,
Finding a channel) — now shall this refresh

The thirsty donor with a drop or two!
Here has been truth at issue with a lie:
Let who gained truth the day have handsome pride
In his own prowess! Eh! What ails the man?

"Well, it is over, ends as I foresaw:
Easily proved, Pompilia's innocence!
Catch them entrusting Guido's guilt to me
Who had, as usual, the plain truth to plead.
I always knew the clearness of the stream
Would show the fish so thoroughly, child might prong
The clumsy monster: with no mud to splash,
Small credit to lynx-eye and lightning-spear!
This Guido, — (much sport he contrived to make,
Who at first twist, preamble of the cord,
Turned white, told all, like the poltroon he was!) —
Finished, as you expect, a penitent,
Fully confessed his crime, and made amends,
And, edifying Rome last Saturday,
Died like a saint, poor devil! That 's the man
The gods still give to my antagonist:
Imagine how Arcangeli claps wing
And crows! 'Such formidable facts to face,
So naked to attack, my client here,
And yet I kept a month the Fisc at bay,
And in the end had foiled him of the prize
By this arch-stroke, this plea of privilege,
But that the Pope must gratify his whim,
Put in his word, poor old man, — let it pass!'
— Such is the cue to which all Rome responds.
What with the plain truth given me to uphold,
And, should I let truth slip, the Pope at hand
To pick up, steady her on legs again,
My office turns a pleasantry indeed!

Not that the burly boaster did one jot
O' the little was to do — young Spreti's work !
But for him, — mannikin and dandiprat,
Mere candle-end and inch of cleverness
Stuck on Arcangeli's save-all, — but for him
The spruce young Spreti, what is bad were worse !

"I looked that Rome should have the natural gird
At advocate with case that proves itself;
I knew Arcangeli would grin and brag :
But what say you to one impertinence
Might move a stone ? That monk, you are to know,
That barefoot Augustinian whose report
O' the dying woman's words did detriment
To my best points it took the freshness from,
— That meddler preached to purpose yesterday
At San Lorenzo as a winding-up
O' the show which proved a treasure to the church.
Out comes his sermon smoking from the press :
Its text — 'Let God be true, and every man
A liar' — and its application, this
The longest-winded of the paragraphs,
I straight unstitch, tear out and treat you with :
'T is piping hot and posts through Rome to-day.
Remember it, as I engage to do !

"But if you rather be disposed to see
In the result of the long trial here, —
This dealing doom to guilt and doling praise
To innocency, — any proof that truth
May look for vindication from the world,
Much will you have misread the signs, I say.
God, who seems acquiescent in the main
With those who add 'So will he ever sleep' —

Flutters their foolishness from time to time,
Puts forth His right-hand recognizably ;
Even as, to fools who deem He needs must right
Wrong on the instant, as if earth were heaven,
He wakes remonstrance — 'Passive, Lord, how long?
Because Pompilia's purity prevails,
Conclude you, all truth triumphs in the end?
So might those old inhabitants of the ark,
Witnessing haply their dove's safe return,
Pronounce there was no danger, all the while
O' the deluge, to the creature's counterparts,
Aught that beat wing i' the world, was white or soft, —
And that the lark, the thrush, the culver too,
Might easily have traversed air, found earth,
And brought back olive-branch in unharmed bill.
Methinks I hear the Patriarch's warning voice —
'Though this one breast, by miracle, return,
No wave rolls by, in all the waste, but bears
Within it some dead dove-like thing as dear,
Beauty made blank and harmlessness destroyed!'
How many chaste and noble sister-fames
Wanted the extricating hand, so lie
Strangled, for one Pompilia proud above
The welter, plucked from the world's calumny,
Stupidity, simplicity, — who cares?

"Romans! An elder race possessed your land
Long ago, and a false faith lingered still,
As shades do though the morning-star be out.
Doubtless some pagan of the twilight-day
Has often pointed to a cavern-mouth
Obnoxious to beholders, hard by Rome,
And said, — nor he a bad man, no, nor fool,
Only a man born blind like all his mates, —

'Here skulk in safety, lurk, defying law,
The devotees to execrable creed,
Adoring — with what culture . . . Jove, avert
Thy vengeance from us worshippers of thee! . . .
What rites obscene — their idol-god, an Ass!'
So went the word forth, so acceptance found,
So century re-echoed century,
Cursed the accursed, — and so, from sire to son,
You Romans cried 'The offscourings of our race
Corrupt within the depths there: fitly fiends
Perform a temple-service o'er the dead:
Child, gather garment round thee, pass nor pry!'
Thus groaned your generations: till the time
Grew ripe, and lightning had revealed, belike, —
Thro' crevice peeped into by curious fear, —
Some object even fear could recognize
I' the place of spectres; on the illumined wall,
To-wit, some nook, tradition talks about,
Narrow and short, a corpse's length, no more:
And by it, in the due receptacle,
The little rude brown lamp of earthenware,
The cruse, was meant for flowers but now held blood,
The rough-scratched palm-branch, and the legend left,
Pro Christo. Then the mystery lay clear:
The abhorred one was a martyr all the time,
Heaven's saint whereof earth was not worthy. What?
Do you continue in the old belief?
Where blackness bides unbroke, must devils brood?
Is it so certain not another cell
O' the myriad that make up the catacomb
Contains some saint a second flash would show?
Will you ascend into the light of day
And, having recognized a martyr's shrine,
Go join the votaries that gape around

Each vulgar god that awes the market-place?
Are these the objects of your praising? See!
In the outstretched right hand of Apollo, there,
Lies screened a scorpion: housed amid the folds
Of Juno's mantle lurks a centipede!
Each statue of a god were fitlier styled
Demon and devil. Glorify no brass
That shines like burnished gold in noonday glare,
For fools! Be otherwise instructed, you!
And preferably ponder, ere ye judge,
Each incident of this strange human play
Privily acted on a theatre
That seemed secure from every gaze but God's, —
Till, of a sudden, earthquake laid wall low
And let the world perceive wild work inside,
And how, in petrifaction of surprise,
The actors stood, — raised arm and planted foot, —
Mouth as it made, eye as it evidenced,
Despairing shriek, triumphant hate, — transfixed,
Both he who takes and she who yields the life.

"As ye become spectators of this scene,
Watch obscuration of a pearl-pure fame
By vapory films, enwoven circumstance,
— A soul made weak by its pathetic want
Of just the first apprenticeship to sin,
Which thenceforth makes the sinning soul secure
From all foes save itself, souls' truliest foe, —
Since egg turned snake needs fear no serpentry, —
As ye behold this web of circumstance
Deepen the more for every thrill and throe,
Convulsive effort to disperse the films
And disenmesh the fame o' the martyr, — mark
How all those means, the unfriended one pursues,

To keep the treasure trusted to her breast,
Each struggle in the flight from death to life,
How all, by procuration of the powers
Of darkness, are transformed, — no single ray,
Shot forth to show and save the inmost star,
But, passed as through hell's prism, proceeding black
To the world that hates white : as ye watch, I say,
Till dusk and such defacement grow eclipse
By, — marvellous perversity of man! —
The inadequacy and inaptitude
Of that self-same machine, that very law
Man vaunts, devised to dissipate the gloom,
Rescue the drowning orb from calumny,
— Hear law, appointed to defend the just,
Submit, for best defence, that wickedness
Was bred of flesh and innate with the bone
Borne by Pompilia's spirit for a space,
And no mere chance fault, passionate and brief:
Finally, when ye find, — after this touch
Of man's protection which intends to mar
The last pin-point of light and damn the disc, —
One wave of the hand of God amid the worlds
Bid vapor vanish, darkness flee away,
And let the vexed star culminate in peace
Approachable no more by earthly mist —
What I call God's hand, — you, perhaps, — mere chance
Of the true instinct of an old good man
Who happens to hate darkness and love light, —
In whom too was the eye that saw, not dim,
The natural force to do the thing he saw,
Nowise abated, — both by miracle, —
All this well pondered, — I demand assent
To the enunciation of my text

In face of one proof more that 'God is true
And every man a liar' — that who trusts
To human testimony for a fact
Gets this sole fact — himself is proved a fool;
Man's speech being false, if but by consequence
That only strength is true: while man is weak,
And, since truth seems reserved for heaven not earth,
Plagued here by earth's prerogative of lies,
Should learn to love and long for what, one day,
Approved by life's probation, he may speak.

"For me, the weary and worn, who haply prompt
To mirth or pity, as I move the mood, —
A friar who glides unnoticed to the grave,
With these bare feet, coarse robe and rope-girt waist, —
I have long since renounced your world, ye know:
Yet what forbids I weigh the prize forgone,
The worldly worth? I dare, as I were dead,
Disinterestedly judge this and that
Good ye account good: but God tries the heart.
Still, if you question me of my content
At having put each human pleasure by,
I answer, at the urgency of truth:
As this world seems, I dare not say I know
— Apart from Christ's assurance which decides —
Whether I have not failed to taste much joy.
For many a doubt will fain perturb my choice —
Many a dream of life spent otherwise —
How human love, in varied shapes, might work
As glory, or as rapture, or as grace:
How conversancy with the books that teach,
The arts that help, — how, to grow good and great,
Rather than simply good, and bring thereby
Goodness to breathe and live, nor, born i' the brain,

Die there, — how these and many another gift
Of life are precious though abjured by me.
But, for one prize, best meed of mightiest man,
Arch-object of ambition, — earthly praise,
Repute o' the world, the flourish of loud trump,
The softer social fluting, — Oh, for these,
— No, my friends! Fame, — that bubble which, world-wide
Each blows and bids his neighbor lend a breath,
That so he haply may behold thereon
One more enlarged distorted false fool's-face,
Until some glassy nothing grown as big
Send by a touch the imperishable to suds, —
No, in renouncing fame, my loss was light,
Choosing obscurity, my chance was well!"

Didst ever touch such ampollosity
As the monk's own bubble, let alone its spite?
What 's his speech for, but just the fame he flouts?
How he dares reprehend both high and low,
Nor stoops to turn the sentence "God is true
And every man a liar — save the Pope
Happily reigning — my respects to him!"
And so round off the period. Molinism
Simple and pure! To what pitch get we next?
I find that, for first pleasant consequence,
Gomez, who had intended to appeal
From the absurd decision of the Court,
Declines, though plain enough his privilege,
To call on help from lawyers any more —
Resolves earth's liars may possess the world,
Till God have had sufficiency of both:
So may I whistle for my job and fee!

But, for this virulent and rabid monk, —
If law be an inadequate machine,
And advocacy, froth and impotence,
We shall soon see, my blatant brother! That 's
Exactly what I hope to show your sort!
For, by a veritable piece of luck,
The providence, you monks round period with,
All may be gloriously retrieved. Perpend!
That Monastery of the Convertites
Whereto the Court consigned Pompilia first,
— Observe, if convertite, why, sinner then,
Or what 's the pertinency of award? —
And whither she was late returned to die,
— Still in their jurisdiction, mark again! —
That thrifty Sisterhood, for perquisite,
Claims every piece whereof may die possessed
Each sinner in the circuit of its walls.
Now, this Pompilia seeing that, by death
O' the couple, all their wealth devolved on her,
Straight utilized the respite ere decease,
By regular conveyance of the goods
She thought her own, to will and to devise, —
Gave all to friends, Tighetti and the like,
In trust for him she held her son and heir,
Gaetano, — trust which ends with infancy:
So willing and devising, since assured
The justice of the Court would presently
Confirm her in her rights and exculpate,
Re-integrate and rehabilitate —
Place her as, through my pleading, now she stands.
But here 's the capital mistake: the Court
Found Guido guilty, — but pronounced no word
About the innocency of his wife:
I grounded charge on broader base, I hope!

No matter whether wife be true or false,
The husband must not push aside the law,
And punish of a sudden : that 's the point :
Gather from out my speech the contrary !
It follows that Pompilia, unrelieved
By formal sentence from imputed fault,
Remains unfit to have and to dispose
Of property which law provides shall lapse.
Wherefore the Monastery claims its due :
And whose, pray, whose the office, but the Fisc's ?
Who but I institute procedure next
Against the person of dishonest life,
Pompilia whom last week I sainted so ?
I it is teach the monk what scripture means,
And that the tongue should prove a two-edged sword,
No axe sharp one side, blunt the other way,
Like what amused the town at Guido's cost !
Astræa redux ! I 've a second chance
Before the self-same Court o' the Governor
Who soon shall see volte-face and chop, change sides.
Accordingly, I charge you on your life,
Send me with all despatch the judgment late
O' the Florence Rota Court, confirmative
O' the prior judgment at Arezzo, clenched
Again by the Granducal signature,
Wherein Pompilia is convicted, doomed,
And only destined to escape through flight
The proper punishment. Send me the piece, —
I 'll work it ! And this foul-mouthed friar shall find
His Noah's-dove that brought the olive back
Turn into quite the other sooty scout,
The raven, Noah first put forth the ark,
Which never came back but ate carcasses !
No adequate machinery in law ?

No power of life and death i' the learned tongue ?
Methinks I am already at my speech,
Startle the world with "Thou, Pompilia, thus ?
How is the fine gold of the Temple dim ! "
And so forth. But the courier bids me close,
And clip away one joke that runs through Rome,
Side by side with the sermon which I send.
How like the heartlessness of the old hunks
Arcangeli ! His Count is hardly cold,
The client whom his blunders sacrificed,
When somebody must needs describe the scene —
How the procession ended at the church
That boasts the famous relic : quoth our brute,
"Why, that 's just Martial's phrase for 'make an end'—
Ad umbilicum sic perventum est !"
The callous dog, — let who will cut off head,
He cuts a joke and cares no more than so !
I think my speech shall modify his mirth.
"How is the fine gold dim ! " — but send the piece !

Alack, Bottini, what is my next word
But death to all that hope ? The Instrument
Is plain before me, print that ends my Book
With the definite verdict of the Court,
Dated September, six months afterward,
(Such trouble and so long the old Pope gave !)
"In restitution of the perfect fame
Of dead Pompilia, *quondam* Guido's wife,
And warrant to her representative
Domenico Tighetti, barred hereby,
While doing duty in his guardianship,
From all molesting, all disquietude,
Each perturbation and vexation brought

Or threatened to be brought against the heir
By the Most Venerable Convent called
Saint Mary Magdalen o' the Convertites
I' the Corso."
Justice done a second time!
Well judged, Mark Antony, *Locum-tenens*
O' the Governor, a Venturini too!
For which I save thy name, — last of the list!

Next year but one, completing his nine years
Of rule in Rome, died Innocent my Pope
— By some account, on his accession-day.
If he thought doubt would do the next age good,
'T is pity he died unapprised what birth
His reign may boast of, be remembered by —
Terrible Pope, too, of a kind, — Voltaire.

And so an end of all i' the story. Strain
Never so much my eyes, I miss the mark
If lived or died that Gaetano, child
Of Guido and Pompilia: only find,
Immediately upon his father's death,
A record, in the annals of the town —
That Porzia, sister of our Guido, moved
The Priors of Arezzo and their head
Its Gonfalonier to give loyally
A public attestation of the right
O' the Franceschini to all reverence —
Apparently because of the incident
O' the murder, — there 's no mention made o' the crime,
But what else could have caused such urgency
To cure the mob, just then, of greediness
For scandal, love of lying vanity,
And appetite to swallow crude reports
That bring annoyance to their betters? — bane

Which, here, was promptly met by antidote.
I like and shall translate the eloquence
Of nearly the worst Latin ever writ:
"Since antique time whereof the memory
Holds the beginning, to this present hour,
The Franceschini ever shone, and shine
Still i' the primary rank, supreme amid
The lustres of Arezzo, proud to own
In this great family, the flag-bearer,
Guide of her steps and guardian against foe, —
As in the first beginning, so to-day!"
There, would you disbelieve the annalist,
Go rather by the babble of a bard?
I thought, Arezzo, thou hadst fitter souls,
Petrarch, — nay, Buonarroti at a pinch,
To do thee credit as *vexillifer!*
Was it mere mirth the Patavinian meant,
Making thee out, in his veracious page,
Founded by Janus of the Double Face?

Well, proving of such perfect parentage,
Our Gaetano, born of love and hate,
Did the babe live or die? I fain would find!
What were his fancies if he grew a man?
Was he proud, — a true scion of the stock
Which bore the blazon, shall make bright my page —
Shield, Azure, on a Triple Mountain, Or,
A Palm-tree, Proper, whereunto is tied
A Greyhound, Rampant, striving in the slips?
Or did he love his mother, the base-born,
And fight i' the ranks, unnoticed by the world?

Such, then, the final state o' the story. So
Did the Star Wormwood in a blazing fall
Frighten awhile the waters and lie lost.

So did this old woe fade from memory:
Till after, in the fulness of the days,
I needs must find an ember yet unquenched,
And, breathing, blow the spark to flame. It lives,
If precious be the soul of man to man.

So, British Public, who may like me yet,
(Marry and amen!) learn one lesson hence
Of many which whatever lives should teach:
This lesson, that our human speech is naught,
Our human testimony false, our fame
And human estimation words and wind.
Why take the artistic way to prove so much?
Because, it is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.
How look a brother in the face and say
"Thy right is wrong, eyes hast thou yet art blind,
Thine ears are stuffed and stopped, despite their length:
And, oh, the foolishness thou countest faith!"
Say this as silverly as tongue can troll —
The anger of the man may be endured,
The shrug, the disappointed eyes of him
Are not so bad to bear — but here 's the plague
That all this trouble comes of telling truth,
Which truth, by when it reaches him, looks false,
Seems to be just the thing it would supplant,
Nor recognizable by whom it left:
While falsehood would have done the work of truth.
But Art, — wherein man nowise speaks to men,
Only to mankind, — Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,

Beyond mere imagery on the wall, —
So, note by note, bring music from your mind,
Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived, —
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.

And save the soul! If this intent save mine, —
If the rough ore be rounded to a ring,
Render all duty which good ring should do,
And, failing grace, succeed in guardianship, —
Might mine but lie outside thine, Lyric Love,
Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet praised)
Linking our England to his Italy!

APPENDIX.

THE RAW MATERIAL OF THE RING AND THE BOOK.

ALMOST every incident contained in the "Old Square Yellow Book" is said to have been worked into the poem. The bare facts of the antique chronicle, together with an outline of the story it tells, are given by Mrs. Orr as follows:—

There lived in Rome in 1679 Pietro and Violante Comparini, an elderly couple of the middle class, fond of show and good living, and who in spite of a fair income had run considerably into debt. They were, indeed, at the period in question, in receipt of a papal bounty, employed in the relief of the needy who did not like to beg. Creditors were pressing, and only one expedient suggested itself: they must have a child; and thus enable themselves to draw on their capital, now tied up for the benefit of an unknown heir-at-law. The wife conceived this plan, and also carried it out, without taking her husband into her confidence. She secured beforehand the infant of a poor and not very reputable woman, announced her expectation, half miraculous at her past fifty years, and became, to all appearance, the mother of a girl, the Francesca Pompilia of the story.

When Pompilia had reached the age of thirteen, there was also in Rome Count Guido Franceschini, an impoverished nobleman of Arezzo, and the elder of three brothers, of whom the second, Abate Paolo, and the third, Canon Girolamo, also play some part in the story. Count Guido himself belonged to the minor ranks of the priesthood, and

had spent his best years in seeking preferment in it. Preferment had not come, and the only means of building up the family fortunes in his own person, was now a moneyed wife. He was poor, fifty years old, and personally unattractive. A contemporary chronicle describes him as short, thin, and pale, and with a projecting nose. He had nothing to offer but his rank; but in the case of a very obscure heiress, this might suffice, and such a one seemed to present herself in Pompilia Comparini. He heard of her at the local centre of gossip, the barber's shop; received an exaggerated estimate of her dowry; and made proposals for her hand; being supported in his suit by the Abate Paul. They did not, on their side, understate the advantages of the connection. They are, indeed, said to have given as their yearly income a sum exceeding their capital, and Violante was soon dazzled into consenting to it. Old Pietro was more wary. He made inquiries as to the state of the Count's fortune, and declined, under plea of his daughter's extreme youth, to think of him as a son-in-law.

Violante pretended submission, secretly led Pompilia to a church, the very church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, where four years later the murdered bodies of all three were to be displayed, and brought her back as Count Guido's wife. Pietro could only accept the accomplished fact; and he so far resigned himself to it, that he paid down an instalment of his daughter's dowry, and made up the deficiency by transferring to the newly married couple all that he actually possessed. This left him no choice but to live under their roof, and the four removed together to the Franceschini abode at Arezzo. The arrangement proved disastrous; and at the end of a few months Pietro and Violante were glad to return to Rome, though with empty pockets, and on money lent them for the journey by their son-in-law.

We have conflicting testimony as to the cause of this rupture. The Governor of Arezzo, writing to the Abate Paul in Rome, lays all the blame of it on the Comparini,

whom he taxes with vulgar and aggressive behavior; and Mr. Browning readily admits that at the beginning there may have been faults on their side. But popular judgment, as well as the balance of evidence, were in favor of the opposite view; and curious details are given by Pompilia and by a servant of the family, a sworn witness on Pompilia's trial, of the petty cruelties and privations to which both parents and child were subjected.

So much, at all events, was clear; Violante's sin had overtaken her; and it now occurred to her, apparently for the first time, to cast off its burden by confession. The moment was propitious, for the Pope had proclaimed a jubilee in honor of his eightieth year, and absolution was to be had for the asking. But the Church in this case made conditions. Absolution must be preceded by atonement. Violante must restore to her legal heirs that of which her pretended motherhood had defrauded them. The first step toward this was to reveal the fraud to her husband; and Pietro lost no time in making use of the revelation. He repudiated Pompilia, and with her all claims on her husband's part. The case was carried into court. The Court decreed a compromise. Pietro appealed from the decree, and the question remained unsettled.

The chief sufferer by these proceedings was Pompilia herself. She already had reason to dread her husband as a tyrant — he to dislike her as a victim; and his discovery of her base birth, with the threatened loss of the greater part of her dowry, could only result, with such a man, in increased aversion towards her. From this moment his one aim seems to have been to get rid of his wife, but in such a manner as not to forfeit any pecuniary advantage he might still derive from their union. This could only be done by convicting her of infidelity; and he attacked her so furiously, and so persistently, on the subject of a certain Canon Giuseppe Caponsacchi, whom she barely knew, but whose attentions he declared her to have challenged, that at last she fled from Arezzo with this very man.

She had appealed for protection against her husband's violence to the Archbishop and to the Governor. She had striven to enlist the aid of his brother-in-law, Conti. She had implored a priest in confession to write for her to her parents, and induce them to fetch her away. But the whole town was in the interest of the Franceschini, or in dread of them. Her prayers were useless, and Caponsacchi, whom she had heard of as a "resolute man," appeared her last resource. He was, as she knew, contemplating a journey to Rome; an opportunity presented itself for speaking to him from her window, or her balcony; and she persuaded him, though not without difficulty, to assist her escape, and conduct her to her old home. On a given night she slipped away from her husband's side, and joined the Canon where he awaited her with a carriage. They travelled day and night till they reached Castelnuovo, a village within four hours of the journey's end. There they were compelled to rest, and there also the husband overtook them. They were not together at the moment; but the fact of the elopement was patent; and if Franceschini had killed his wife there, in the supposed excitement of the discovery, the law might have dealt leniently with him. But it suited him best for the time being to let her live. He procured the arrest of the fugitives, and after a short confinement on the spot, they were conveyed to the New Prisons in Rome (Carceri Nuove) and tried on the charge of adultery.

It is impossible not to believe that Count Guido had been working toward this end. Pompilia's verbal communications with Caponsacchi had been supplemented by letters, now brought to him in her name, now thrown or let down from her window as he passed the house. They were written, as he said, on the subject of the flight, and, as he also said, he burned them as soon as read, not doubting their authenticity. But Pompilia declared, on examination, that she could neither write nor read; and setting aside all presumption of her veracity, this was more than probable. The writer of the letters must, therefore,

have been the Count, or some one employed by him for the purpose. He now completed the intrigue by producing eighteen or twenty more of a very incriminating character, which he declared to have been left by the prisoners at Castelnuovo ; and these were not only disclaimed with every appearance of sincerity by both the persons accused, but bore the marks of forgery within themselves.

Pompilia and Caponsacchi answered all the questions addressed to them simply and firmly ; and though their statements did not always coincide, these were calculated on the whole to create a moral conviction of their innocence ; the facts on which they disagreed being of little weight. But moral conviction was not legal proof ; the question of false testimony does not seem to have been even raised ; and the Court found itself in a dilemma, which it acknowledged in the following way : it was decreed that for his complicity in "the flight and deviation of Francesca Comparini," and too great intimacy with her, Caponsacchi should be banished for three years to Civita Vecchia ; and that Pompilia, on her side, should be relegated, for the time being, to a convent. That is to say : the prisoners were pronounced guilty ; and a merely nominal punishment was inflicted upon them.

The records of this trial contain almost everything of biographical or even dramatic interest in the original book. They are, so far as they go, the complete history of the case ; and the result of the trial, ambiguous as it was, supplied the only argument on which an even formal defence of the subsequent murder could be based. The substance of these records appears in full in Mr. Browning's work ; and his readers can judge for themselves whether the letters which were intended to substantiate Pompilia's guilt, could, even if she had possessed the power of writing, have been written by a woman so young and so uncultured as herself. They will also see that the Count's plot against his wife was still more deeply laid than the above-mentioned circumstances attest.

Count Guido was of course not satisfied. He wanted

a divorce; and he continued to sue for it by means of his brother, the Abate Paul, then residing in Rome; but before long he received news which was destined to change his plans. Pompilia was about to become a mother; and in consideration of her state, she had been removed from the convent to her paternal home, where she was still to be ostensibly a prisoner. The Comparini then occupied a small villa outside one of the city gates. A few months later, in this secluded spot, the Countess Franceschini gave birth to a son, whom her parents lost no time in conveying to a place of concealment and safety. The murder took place a fortnight after this event. I give the rest of the story in an almost literal translation from a contemporary narrative, which was published, immediately after the Count's execution, in the form of a pamphlet [1] — the then current substitute for a newspaper.

"Being oppressed by various feelings, and stimulated to revenge, now by honor, now by self-interest, yielding to his wicked thoughts, he (Count Guido) devised a plan for killing his wife and her nominal parents; and having enlisted in his enterprise four other ruffians," — laborers on his property, "started with them from Arezzo, and on Christmas-eve arrived in Rome, and took up his abode at Ponte Milvio, where there was a villa belonging to his brother, and where he concealed himself with his followers till the fitting moment for the execution of his design had arrived. Having therefore watched from thence all the movements of the Comparini family, he proceeded on Thursday, the 2d of January, at one o'clock of the night,[2] with his companions to the Comparini's house; and having left Biagio Agostinelli and Domenico Gambasini at the gate, he instructed one of the others to knock at the house-door, which was opened to him on his declaring that he brought a letter from Canon Caponsacchi at Civita Vecchia. The wicked Franceschini, supported by

1 This pamphlet has supplied Mr. Browning with some of his most curious facts. It fell into his hands in London.

2 The first hour after sunset.

two other of his assassins, instantly threw himself on Violante Comparini, who had opened the door, and flung her dead upon the ground. Pompilia, in this extremity, extinguished the light, thinking thus to elude her assassins, and made for the door of a neighboring blacksmith, crying for help. Seeing Franceschini provided with a lantern, she ran and hid herself under the bed, but being dragged from under it, the unhappy woman was barbarously put to death by twenty-two wounds from the hand of her husband, who, not content with this, dragged her to the feet of Comparini, who, being similarly wounded by another of the assassins, was crying, '*confession.*'

"At the noise of this horrible massacre people rushed to the spot; but the villains succeeded in flying, leaving behind, however, in their haste, one his cloak, and Franceschini his cap, which was the means of betraying them. The unfortunate Francesca Pompilia, in spite of all the wounds with which she had been mangled, having implored of the Holy Virgin the grace of being allowed to confess, obtained it, since she was able to survive for a short time and describe the horrible attack. She also related that after the deed, her husband asked the assassin who had helped him to murder her *if she were really dead*; and being assured that she was, quickly rejoined, *let us lose no time, but return to the vineyard*;[1] and so they escaped. Meanwhile the police (Forza) having been called, it arrived with its chief officer (Bargello), and a confessor was soon procured, together with a surgeon who devoted himself to the treatment of the unfortunate girl.

"Monsignore the Governor, being informed of the event, immediately despatched Captain Patrizj to arrest the culprits; but on reaching the vineyard the police officers discovered that they were no longer there, but had gone toward the high road an hour before. Patrizj pursued his journey without rest, and having arrived at

1 "Villa" is often called "vineyard" or "vigna," on account of the vineyard attached to it.

the inn, was told by the landlord that Franceschini had insisted upon obtaining horses, which were refused to him because he was not supplied with the necessary order; and had proceeded therefore on foot with his companions toward Baccano. Continuing his march, and taking the necessary precautions, he arrived at the Merluzza inn, and there discovered the assassins, who were speedily arrested, their knives still stained with blood, a hundred and fifty scudi in coin being also found on Franceschini's person. The arrest, however, cost Patrizj his life, for he had heated himself too much, and having received a slight wound, died in a few days.

"The knife of Franceschini was on the Genoese pattern, and triangular; and was notched at the edge, so that it could not be withdrawn from the wounded flesh without lacerating it in such a manner as to render the wound incurable.

"The criminals being taken to Ponte Milvio, they went through a first examination at the inn there at the hands of the notaries and judges sent thither for the purpose, and the chief points of a confession were obtained from them.

"When the capture of the delinquents was known in Rome, a multitude of the people hastened to see them as they were conveyed bound on horses into the city. It is related that Franceschini having asked one of the police officers in the course of the journey *how ever the crime had been discovered*, and being told *that it had been revealed by his wife, whom they had found still living*, was almost stupefied by the intelligence. Toward twenty-three o'clock (the last hour before sunset) they arrived at the prisons. A certain Francesco Pasquini, of Città di Castello, and Allessandro Baldeschi, of the same town, both twenty-two years of age, were the assistants of Guido Franceschini in the murder of the Comparini; and Gambasini and Agnostinelli were those who stood on guard at the gate.

"Meanwhile the corpses of the assassinated Comparini

were exposed at San Lorenzo in Lucina, but so disfigured, and especially Franceschini's wife, by their wounds in the face, that they were no longer recognizable. The unhappy Francesca, after taking the sacrament, forgiving her murderers, under seventeen years of age, and after having made her will, died on the sixth day of the month, which was that of the Epiphany; and was able to clear herself of all the calumnies which her husband had brought against her. The surprise of the people in seeing these corpses was great, from the atrocity of the deed, which made one really shudder, seeing two septuagenarians and a girl of seventeen so miserably put to death.

"The trial proceeding meanwhile, many papers were drawn up on the subject, bringing forward all the most incriminating circumstances of this horrible massacre; and others also were written for the defence with much erudition, especially by the advocate of the poor, a certain Monsignor Spreti, which had the effect of postponing the sentence; also because Baldeschi persisted in denial, though he was tortured with the rope, and twice fainted under it. At last he confessed, and so did the others, who also revealed the fact that they had intended in due time to murder Franceschini himself, and take his money, because he had not kept his promise of paying them the moment they should have left Rome.

"On the twenty-second of February there appeared on the Piazza del Popolo a large platform with a guillotine and two gibbets, on which the culprits were to be executed. Many stands were constructed for the convenience of those who were curious to witness such a terrible act of justice; and the concourse was so great that some windows fetched as much as six dollars each. At eight o'clock Franceschini and his companions were summoned to their death, and having been placed in the Consorteria, and there assisted by the Abate Panciatici and the Cardinal Acciajuoli, forthwith disposed themselves to die well. At twenty o'clock the Company of Death and the Misericordia reached the dungeons, and

the condemned were let down, placed on separate carts, and conveyed to the place of execution."

It is farther stated that Franceschini showed the most intrepidity and cold blood of them all, and that he died with the name of Jesus on his lips. He wore the same clothes in which he had committed the crime : a close fitting garment (*juste-au-corps*) of gray cloth, a loose black shirt (*camiciuola*), a goat's hair cloak, a white hat, and a cotton cap.

The attempt made by him to defraud his accomplices, poor and helpless as they were, has been accepted by Mr. Browning as an indication of character which forbade any lenient interpretation of his previous acts. Pompilia, on the other hand, is absolved, by all the circumstances of her protracted death, from any doubt of her innocence which previous evidence might have raised. Ten different persons attest, not only her denial of any offence against her husband, but, what is of far more value, her Christian gentleness, and absolute maiden modesty, under the sufferings of her last days, and the medical treatment to which they subjected her. Among the witnesses are a doctor of theology (Abate Liberato Barberito), the apothecary and his assistant and a number of monks or priests ; the first and most circumstantial deposition being that of an Augustine, Frà Celestino Angelo di Sant' Anna, and concluding with these words: "I do not say more, for fear of being taxed with partiality. I know well that God alone can examine the heart. But I know also that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks ; and that my great St. Augustine says : 'As the life was, so is its end.'"

It needed all the evidence in Pompilia's favor to secure the full punishment of her murderer, strengthened, as he was, by social and ecclesiastical position, and by the acknowledged rights of marital jealousy. We find curious proof of the sympathies which might have prejudiced his wife's cause, in the marginal notes appended to her depositions, and which repeatedly introduce them as lies.

"F. *Lie concerning the arrival at Castelnuovo.*"

"H. *New lies to the effect that she did not receive the lover's letters, and does not know how to write,*" etc., etc.[1]

The significant question, "Whether and when a husband may kill his unfaithful wife," was in the present case not thought to be finally answered, till an appeal had been made from the ecclesiastical tribunal to the Pope himself. It was Innocent XII. who virtually sentenced Count Franceschini and his four accomplices to death.

[1] It is difficult to reconcile this explicit denial of Pompilia's statements with the belief in her implied in her merely nominal punishment: unless we look on it as a part of the formal condemnation which circumstances seemed to exact.

NOTES.

Book VII. — Pompilia.

Line 22. *What the marble lion meant:* a lion preying on a man symbolized the severity of the Church toward the impenitent or heretical. The lions in the portico are, together with the Campanile, the oldest part of the church of San Lorenzo.

102. *A new saint:* Saint Gaetan or Cajetan, founder of the order of Theatins, who lived 1480–1547, and was canonized by Clement X. in 1671.

183. *A tapestry on the wall:* this tapestry evidently represented Diana hunting a stag, and hamadryads, or tree nymphs.

260. *San Giovanni:* this church is built upon the site of the ancient palace of Plautius Lateranus, hence it is called "The Lateran." It dates from the time of Constantine, and is first in rank of the five patriarchal churches.

389. *Cavalier:* Perseus rescuing Andromeda from the sea-monster.

419. *Master Malpichi:* there was a great physician named Marcello Malpighi who is probably meant. He became physician to Pope Innocent XII. (1628–1694).

423. *Lion's-mouth:* the name of a street in Rome. *Via di Bocca di Lione.*

602. *Square o' the Spaniards:* Piazza di Spagne is in the centre of the strangers' quarter in Rome.

1008. *Cornet:* a piece of paper twisted into a conical shape (such as is commonly used by grocers).

1143. *Mirtillo:* evidently used as the name of a pastoral lover who has written a sonnet to his love.

1315. *That piece i' the Pieve:* at the high altar is a picture by Vasari of Saint George killing the dragon.

Book VIII. — Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis, Pauperum Procurator.

Pauperum Procurator: the official defender of criminals, as the "Fisc" is the official prosecutor.

Line 2. *Cinone:* a pet diminutive of Giacinto, as are Cinozzo, Cinoncello, Cinino, and various other forms occurring in this Book.

7. *Quies me cum subjunctivo:* a truce with the subjunctive; or, as Professor Corson explains it: "The poet has used the relative *qui* as a verb, to which he has joined the ending of the third person singular, present tense, of the English verb. The 'es' of the word is in Roman type, while 'qui' is italicized. My Giacinto 'branches me out his verb-tree on the slate . . . *Quies me*' etc., that is, gives me the rule of *qui* with the subjunctive. The word should be pronounced in one syllable, *kweez*, and is to be construed with *branches*. It is an instance of Browning's lovely literary audacity." Probably Browning had both ideas in mind, and this is a punning quip. Professor Genung, also, suggests that the poet has, "in his dashing way, made the Latin interrogative *qui* into an English verb, to qui = to quiz. He quizzes me with the subjunctive, raises all sorts of questions about it, and all so cute and clever that I could cry over it."

8. *Corderius:* Mathurin Cordier, author of the most popular Latin school-book of the sixteenth century, the "Colloquia Scholastica."

13. *Triturate:* grind down.

14. *Papinianian:* from Papinius, a Roman jurist of the beginning of the third century.

35. *Orvieto:* a rich wine.

42. *Galligaskin:* large hose or trousers, evidently, from the context, worn as an outer protection.

44. *Condotti:* a street which runs off the Corso.

56. *Flaccus:* Horace, "Satires," ii. 5, 35, *quassa nuce*, a proverbial expression for something worthless.

92. *Non nobis*, etc.: not unto us, O Lord, but to thee the praise.

99. *Pro Milone:* Cicero's great speech in defence of Milo on a charge of murder.

113. *Hortensius:* the great Roman orator, contemporary with Cicero.

114. *Est-est:* a wine so called because a nobleman once sent his servant in advance to write "Est," it is! on any inn where the wine was particularly good. At one inn it was so superlatively good that he wrote *Est-est*.

125. *Pro Guidone et Sociis:* for Guido and his associates.

127. *Duxit in uxorem:* as Browning gives a free version of most of the Latin used by Archangelis in his defence, literal translations are omitted from the notes. Only where no hint of the meaning can be gained from the text, will a translation be given.

138. *Owls for augury:* the owl was considered a bird of evil omen.

145. *Farinacci:* see note, below, 322.

170. *Insulse:* absurd.

322. *Farinacci:* Prosper Farinacci (1544–1613), author of a volume of "Variæ Quæstiones" and other legal treatises, which were regarded as of very high authority during the seventeenth century. In 1599 he defended Beatrice Cenci on the charge of murdering her father. — *Gamaliel:* see Acts xxii. 3.

332. *The poet's word:* see Virgil, "Georgics," ii. 458.

354. *Dubiety:* doubtfulness.

464. *To whose dominion*, etc.: "His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono; Imperium sine fine dedi" (Virgil, "Æneid," i. 278, 279).

467. *Poscimur:* something is expected of us.

475. *Cassiodorus:* a Roman historian, statesman, and monk who lived about 468. He was raised by Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths, to the highest offices. He was among the first of literary monks. His books were much read in the Middle Ages. See note, I. 228.

481. *Aristotle:* celebrated Greek writer on philosophy, ethics, physics, etc., 384–323 B. C.

490. *Scaliger:* Joseph Justice, son of Julius Cæsar Scaliger, both eminent men of learning.

495. *Idyllist:* Theocritus, a Greek poet who flourished in the third century B. C. He wrote a number of idylls (little pictures), principally portraying country life.

504. *Ælian:* in his "De Natura Animalium," xi. 15.

534. *Absit:* away!

562. *The Athenian Code, Solon's:* see note, I. 219.

564. *The Laws of the Twelve Tables:* this was the first Roman code of laws and applied to both Plebs and Patricians. It was drawn up 451 B. C. by ten Decemvirs elected for the purpose, and was engraved on twelve tables of brass.

565. *Romulus:* see note, I. 220.

566. *The Julian:* laws passed during the reign of Augustus were called *Leges Julia judiciorum publicorum et privatorum.* Among these was one, *Lex Julia de adulteris*, which punished adultery. The reference is probably to this. See I. 224. — *Cornelian:* laws passed under the Dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla. The law meant here is probably *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis*, a law referring to murderers. See note, I. 223. — *Gracchus' Law:* Caius Sempronius Gracchus, the Roman Tribune, who made many laws.

570. *Diluculum:* daybreak.

578. *Saint Jerome:* a Catholic writer of the fifth century distinguished for his zeal against unbelievers. Died 420.

592. *Gregory:* Pope Gregory the Great (550–640). Among other things he wrote "Dialogues with Peter the Deacon on the Lives and Miracles of the Italian Saints."

613. *Consentaneous:* consistent with.

619. *Saint Bernard:* The celebrated founder of the order of Bernardines (1091–1153). His works were published in Paris by Gaume (1835–1840).

630. *Maratta:* see note, III. 59.

645. *So, pulled down pillar*, etc.: see Judges xvi. 29.

652. *Mansuetude:* gentleness.

685. *Crepuscular:* glimmering.

692. *Stoning by Moses' law:* see Deuteronomy xxii. 24.

693. *Put her away*, etc.: see Matthew v. 32.

726. *The early rude and acorn-eating race:* early Greek myths declare that the first men were born from oaks, and that acorns were their principal food.

727. *Behold, quoth James:* see James iii. 3.

816. *Matthæus:* there was a Dutch jurist of this name born at Utrecht 1635, died 1710.

855. *Sciolist:* a smatterer.

888. *Crudum Priamum . . . Priamique pisinnos:* a line from a translation of Homer by Attius Labeo. The translation as a whole is lost, but this line ("Iliad," iv. 35) is preserved by a scholiast on Persius. Pope's translation reads: "Let Priam bleed . . . Bleed all his sons" ("Iliad," iv. 55).

921. *Ad Areopagum:* the Areopagus was a hill in Athens near the Acropolis, where the Supreme Court held its sessions.

938. *Valerius Maximus:* a Latin writer of the first century who made a collection of historical anecdotes called "Books of Memorable Deeds and Utterances."

940. *Cyriacus:* monk of the convent of Bizona, in Syria (died 1817). He wrote homilies, canons, and epistles.

962. *As Ovid found:* Ovid scribbled verse in the margin of his paper, as a youth, when he ought to have been framing legal orations.

975. *Brazen Head:* it was believed in the Middle Ages that a brazen head could be made which would speak. Roger Bacon is said to have accomplished this feat. When finished, a man was set to watch. At the end of the first half hour the head said, "Time is;" at the end of the second, "Time was;" at the end of the third, "Time 's past." Then it fell down with a crash and was shivered in pieces.

1070. *Sistine:* the chapel of the Papal palace in Rome, celebrated for its wonderful frescos.

1071. *Camerlengo:* the chamberlain of the Pope, who ranks highest among the cardinals, and presides during a vacancy in the Holy See.

1168. *Furor ministrat arma:* Virgil, "Æneid," i. 150.

1169. *Unde mî lapidem . . . unde sagittas:* Horace, "Satires," ii. 7, 116.

1221. *The Horatian satire:* "Satires," i. 2, 46.

1401. *Was Joab's:* see 2 Samuel xii. 26–29.

1405. *Innocentinopolis:* the city of Innocent.

1492. *Tobit:* Apocrypha, Book of Tobit, v. and vi.

1522. *Castrensis, Butringarius:* Paulus de Castro and Jacobus Butrigarius (as the name should be spelt), jurists of the sixteenth century.

1751. *Bipsi:* the perfect should be *bibi*.

1789. *Horatian promise:* Horace, "Epodes," 8, 13.

Book IX. — Juris Doctor Johannes–Baptista Bottinius, Fisci et Rev. Cam. Apostol. Advocatus.

Line 53. *Uberous:* full.

91. *E pluribus unum:* "one made out of many" (Virgil, "Moretum," 103).

97. *Chyme:* the matter into which food is reduced by the juices of the stomach.

109. *Eximious:* select or fastidious.

114. *The Florentine:* Michel Angelo.

115. *The Urbinate:* Rafael.

117. *Ciro Ferri:* a painter (1634–1689), pupil of Pietro da Cortona, who died about nine years before Dr. Bottinius wrote his speech.

145. *Lene tormentum*, etc.: Browning himself supplies a translation, so that it is not necessary here and in other such places to give an English version.

170. *Phryne:* alluding to the defence of the courtesan Phryné by Hyperides, who secured a verdict by displaying her unveiled beauty to the court.

177. *Tale of . . . the slave . . . preferred to Collatine:* the threat of Sextus Tarquinius, that he would swear he had found Lucretia with a slave of her husband's, if she did not yield to his wishes. The stab she gave herself in presence of Brutus and Collatinus struck "the lie dead." See Shakespeare's "Lucrece," 512 and 1850.

213. *Sermocinando*, etc.: let me not declaim beyond the clock with my discoursing.

216. *Flaccus:* Horace, "Odes," ii. 4, 17.

225. *The Teian:* Anacreon, born at Teos in Ionia. The allusion is to Anacreon's second "Ode." "Nature gave horns to bulls, and hoofs to horses, swift-footedness to hares, a gulf of teeth to lions, the power of swimming to fishes, flight to birds, thoughtfulness to men; for women she had naught besides. What then does she give? Beauty instead of all shield, instead of all spears? and any one being beautiful, vanquishes both steel and fire."

283. *The Mantuan:* Virgil. The quotation and reference is to the eclogue where Virgil sings the coming of a new era, the joys of renewed life, and the birth of a child of promise. "Eclogues," 4, 5.

288. *Passage in the Canticles:* Song of Solomon ii. 11–14.

294. *Dibbled:* used a dibble, a pointed instrument for making holes in the ground.

312. *Olent:* odorous.

344. *Flaccus:* Horace, "Odes," ii. 4, 17.

358. *Abigail . . . ministered . . . till Nabal*, etc.: 1 Samuel xxv. 18, 37, 42.

367. *Heu prisca fides:* "alas, the antique faith."

393. *Comacchian:* a kind of eel, a dainty highly prized.

399. *Lernæan snake:* the hydra of Lerna, killed by Hercules.

403. *Insanit homo:* "the man is insane."

426. *The lyrist quoted late:* Anacreon in his "Ode on Women," already given, 225.

452. *Persius:* Epilogue to "Satires," 6–13. "Who

was it made the parrot so glib with its 'good-morning,' and taught magpies to attempt the feat of talking like men? That great teacher of art and bestower of mother-wit, the stomach, which has a knack of getting at speech when Nature refuses it."

463. *Negatas artifex sequi voces:* "skilful at speaking the words denied."

515. *Samson sink into the snare:* Judges xvi.

527. *Idyllium Moschi:* Idyll I. of Moschus. "Cypris, raising the hue and cry for Love, her child . . . 'His prize is the kiss of Cypris, but if thou bringest him, not the bare kiss, but yet more shalt thou win.'"

538. *Myrtillus, Amaryllis:* names commonly given to lovers in pastoral verse.

545. *Ulysses . . . played the spy:* "Odyssey," iv. 316.

572. *Judith . . . Holophernes:* Apocrypha, "Judith," xiii.

579. *Warmth . . . the bane of Icarus:* Dædalus turned his thoughts to arts unknown, and made himself and his son Icarus wings, warning him not to fly too near the sun; but Icarus, touched with a desire to reach heaven, melted in the heat of the sun the wax that fastened his wings and fell into the waters of the Icarian Sea (Ovid, "Metamorphoses," viii. 3).

594. *With him of Gath:* Goliath (1 Samuel xvii. 8).

602. *Saint Paul . . . puny presence:* 2 Corinthians x. 10. In the Apocryphal Gospels, also, Paul is described as little. See "Acts of Paul and Thecla."

622. *Nepenthe:* a drug given to Helen by the Egyptian Polydamna, bringing quick forgetfulness of life's evils (Homer, "Odyssey," iv. 285).

641. *Suis expensis, nemo militat:* "no one goeth a warfare at his own cost."

652. *Dido:* daughter of the King of Tyre, who, when her husband was murdered by her uncle for the sake of his riches, set sail, seeking a new kingdom and carrying away the coveted riches in order to throw them in the sea.

676. *Sororia saltem oscula:* "sisterly kisses, anyhow."

755. *Archimedes:* the Greek mathematician and inventor (287–212 B. C.) said to have been killed while so absorbed in a problem that he did not know Syracuse was sacked.

798. *In the Medicean mode: i. e.* like the statue known as the Venus de' Medici.

851. *Cubiculum:* sleeping-room.

866. *Demodocus:* the minstrel of the Phæacian king, whose song, given in the "Odyssey," viii. 330–450, relates the story of Vulcan referred to here.

880. *Cornelius Tacitus:* the Roman historian (54–110).

886. *Thalassian-pure:* probably refers to the congratulatory exclamation addressed to brides, "Thallasius," or "Talasius," for the origin of which Plutarch gives various accounts in his life of Romulus, one being that when some slaves were carrying off a damsel of superior beauty at the rape of the Sabines and some men of higher rank would have intervened, they cried that they were reserving her for Thalassius, who was so brave a young man that it was thought fit he should have the choicest prize.

931. *Magdalen mistook:* St. John xx. 15.

961. *Hesione:* daughter of Laomedon, king of Troy, exposed on a rock to avert a plague caused by her father's breach of faith, and saved by Hercules, son of Alcmena.

969. *Alcmena's son:* Hercules.

980. *With the unblamed Æthiop:* as described by Homer ("Iliad," i. 423), Zeus had gone to partake of the twelve-day feast of the Ethiopians.

981. *Omphale:* queen of Lydia, who so dominated over the great hero that he was content to sit with her and spin wool while his great tasks were neglected.

990. *Anti-Fabius:* the antithesis of Q. Fabius Maximus, *qui cunctando restituit rem*, who, in the second Punic war, restored the fortunes of Rome by delay, *i. e.* by avoiding pitched battles.

1021. *Sepher Toldoth Yeschu:* meaning the book of the generation of Jesus, an apocryphal writing concerning

events of the New Testament. As Genesis v. 1 begins, "The book of the generation of Adam," so Matthew i. 1 begins, "The book of the generation of Jesus."

1100. *Thucydides . . . sole joke:* the Scholiast, commenting on a lighter passage near the end of Book I. of Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War," observes that "here the lion laughs."

1127. *Sophocles:* "Œdipus at Colonus," 1382. "Justice, declared from of old, sits with Zeus in the might of the eternal laws."

1160. *Leet-day:* day on which the court sits.

1218. *Redeunt Saturnia regna:* Virgil's "Eclogues" again, iv. 5, already referred to, 285.

1224. *Mued:* moulted.

1276. *Colocynth:* a purgative drug made from the bitter seeds of the colocynth, an Asian fruit.

1290. *Forsan et hæc olim meminisse iuvabit:* Virgil, "Æneid," i. 203 — "Perchance one day we shall take pleasure in recalling even these experiences."

1323. *Cujum pecus*, etc.: a quotation from Virgil, "Eclogues," iii. 1, except that *sed* should be *verum*; "'Whose is this flock, — Melibœus'?' 'Nay, Ægon's.'"

1366. *Incipe parve puer*, etc.: Virgil, "Eclogues," iv. 60, referred to. 285, 1218.

1400. *Beati pauperes:* "Blessed are the poor," an allusion to the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, which the failure of Archangelis, advocate of the poor, will render vain in Guido's case.

1484. *Triarii:* the third rank in the old formation of the Roman legion, containing the oldest soldiers, and only called upon at the crisis of a battle.

1496. *Solvuntur tabulæ:* from Horace, "Satires," ii. 86 — *solventur risu tabulæ*, "the court will break up in laughter."

1517. *Titulus:* title.

1562. *Isocrates:* the Attic rhetorician and orator whose "famed panegyric" was delivered 380 B. C. to stir up

the Greeks to unite against Persia. Born 436, died 338 by his own hand after the battle of Chæronea, in despair of his country's fate.

Book X. — The Pope.

Line 1. *Ahasuerus:* see Esther vi. 1.

11. *Peter first to Alexander last:* Saint Peter to Pope Alexander VIII., who died in 1691 and was succeeded by Innocent XII.

25. *Formosus:* Pope (891–895).

26. *Sigebert:* Sigebert II. king of Austrasia, afterwards a monk. He is set down as a saint in the Romish Calendar.

29. *How there was a ghastly Trial once:* this and the accounts following of the successive decisions of the popes is given substantially as Browning gives it in Platina's "Lives of the Popes," Dr. Benham's edition.

32. *Stephen:* Pope (896–897).

89. IXΘΥΣ *which means Fish:* the letters of this Greek word form the initials of the Greek words for Jesus Christ, of God, Son, Saviour (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ). The fish was used by the early Christians as a secret symbol by which they could recognize each other.

91. *Pope is Fisherman:* because he is the successor of Peter, the fisherman, whom Christ said he would make a fisher of men (Mark i. 17).

104. *Romanus:* became Pope in September, 897, and held the see for three months and twenty-two days.

107. *Theodore:* Pope in 898, held the office twenty days.

121. *Luitprand:* a chronicler of the tenth century, and Bishop of Cremona. Died about 970.

128. *John:* (IX.) became Pope in 898. He removed to Ravenna on account of disturbances in Rome.

133. *Eude:* elected King of France in 888.

136. *Auxilius:* a French theologian who lived about 900 and wrote some treatises against Pope Sergius III.

137. *De Ordinationibus:* concerning ordinations

140. *Marinus:* there was an ecclesiastic of this name in the fourth century.

141. *Sergius:* (III.) Pope, from 904–911.

292. *The sagacious Swede:* Swedenborg, born at Stockholm in 1688, died 1772. His theory of mathematical probabilities is referred to here. As he would have been only ten years old at this time, the Pope could not have alluded to him in these terms.

296. *If we dip in Virgil:* see note, V. 401.

465. *Paravent:* protection against wind. — *Ombrifuge:* refuge from rain.

509. *Soldier-crab:* same as hermit-crab. It inhabits the empty shell of mollusks, having to change its home from time to time as it grows larger. It also sheds its own shell like all crabs, and while waiting for a new shell to form is in a very helpless condition.

652. *That other Aretine:* Pietro Aretino, author of various obscene writings.

776. *The gold o' the prime when Saturn ruled:* Greek myth tells of an early golden age when all men were innocent. These innocent clowns revealed a sort of gold that was baser than lead.

811. *Hebetude:* dulness.

832. *Rota:* formerly the supreme court of justice and universal court of appeal. It consisted of twelve members, called auditors, presided over by a dean.

846. *I' the wash o' the wave:* see Matthew viii. 32.

913. *She-pard:* a female leopard.

1092. *The other rose, the gold:* an ornament made of wrought gold, set with gems. It is blessed by the Pope on the fourth Sunday of Lent, and afterwards frequently sent as a mark of favor to some distinguished individual, church, or civil community.

1098. *Leviathan:* Job xli. 102. See also same allusion, V. 1498, and VIII. 1719.

1361. *An isoscele deficient in the base:* two sides of the triangle, strength and intelligence, are visible; the third, goodness, is not so in the present state of our knowledge

1377. *I have said ye are Gods:* see John x. 34.

1398. *Chymic:* chemic. Man explains the effect of cold on the choppy = chapped cheek by chemical action. (We owe this interpretation to Professor Genung.)

1598. *Cardinal Tournon:* was appointed by the Pope apostolic vicar in India. In 1701 he went on a mission to China, where his indiscreet zeal caused him to be imprisoned by the emperor.

1614. *An adept of the . . Rosy Cross:* a member of the society of Rosicrucians. The name is derived from *ros*, dew, and *crux*, cross. Crux is in alchemy the synonym of light, so the Rosicrucians were those who believed that by digesting light with dew the philosopher's stone might be discovered.

1615. *Great Work:* Magnum opus of the sages, "to find the absolute in the infinite, the indefinite and the finite."

1662. *Some bard, philosopher, or both:* the following speech is put into the mouth of Euripides.

1692. *Some "Know thyself" or "Take the golden mean":* typical apothegms of the ancient Greek sages (see Juvenal, "Satires," xi. 24; Horace, "Satires," i. 106).

1701. *The Third Poet:* Euripides. — *The Two:* Æschylus and Sophocles.

1712. *Paul spoke, Felix heard:* see Acts xxiii. 23; xxiv. 10, 25.

1724. *Galileo:* the distinguished Italian astronomer (1564–1642).

1827. *Nero's cross and stake:* the Emperor Nero (37–68 A. D.) crucified and burned the Christians.

1919. *Morrice* = morris, a kind of dance.

1936. *Loyola:* Saint Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits (1491–1556).

1980. *Nemini honorem trado:* "I will not give mine honor to another." See Isaiah xlii. 8, xlviii. 11.

2050. *Barabbas' self:* see Mark xxvii. 15.

2054. *The three little taps:* when a pope dies, the Cardinal Camerlengo has to assure himself of his death by tapping thrice on his forehead with a silver mallet

2063. *Petit-maître:* coxcomb.

2064. *Sanctus et Benedictus:* holy and blessed.

2082. *Priam:* the last king of Troy.

2083. *Hecuba:* wife of Priam. — *Non tali:* see Virgil's "Æneid," ii. 519. *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis tempus eget:* the crisis requires not such aid nor such defenders as thou art.

Book XI. — Guido.

Line 4. *The huge battlemented convent-block . . . Certosa:* a Carthusian monastery in Val Emo, about four miles from Florence.

186. *Mouth-of-Truth:* Bocca della Verità, a huge mask of stone in the portico of the Church Sta. Maria in Cormedin. It was believed that should a doubtful witness put his hand in the mouth of this mask, if he were false, he could not draw it out again.

243. *Elucubrate:* literally, to study by lamplight, here meaning to study out elaborately.

259. *Merry Tales:* the "Novelle" of Franco Sacchetti, 1385–1400.

270. *Albano:* Francesco Albano (1578–1660), an Italian painter born at Bologna, whose paintings of the assumption of Saint Sebastian are in St. Sebastian church in Rome.

272. *Europa:* daughter of Agenor, King of Phœnicia. Jupiter became enamoured of her, and appearing before her in the form of a bull carried her off to Crete.

289. *Atlas:* the name given the first cervical vertebra carrying the head.

290. *Axis:* the second cervical vertebra. — *Symphyses:* the cartilaginous union of the bones.

292. *Silver cord . . . gold bowl:* Ecclesiastes xii. 6.

301. *Extravasate:* let out of the proper vessels.

302. *Roland's sword:* Roland the hero of the "Song of Roland," who was a nephew and paladin of Charlemagne's, wielded a trusty sword called "Durandal."

303. *Oliver's mace:* Roland's companion at arms, who always competed with him in knightly prowess.

324. *Petrus, quo vadis:* "Peter, whither goest thou?" an allusion to the legend that Saint Peter was leaving Rome on the outbreak of the Neronian persecution, when he met Christ coming towards the city, and addressed Him with the words, "*Domine, quo vadis?*" "Lord, whither goest Thou?" The answer was, "*Venio iterum crucifigi,*" "To Rome, to be crucified again;" whereupon Peter was ashamed and turned back and met his martyrdom.

327. *Dorcas:* Acts ix. 36–41.

504. *Gorgon shield:* the shield worn by the chaste Minerva, on which was the snaky head of the Medusa, most deadly of the three Gorgons, and which had power to turn her foes to stone with one look upon it.

566. *King Cophetua:* evidently another Cophetua than he of Africa who married the beggar-maid, and probably an original instance of Browning's.

680. *Tinkle:* the ringing of the bell which denotes the elevation of the Host.

682. *Trebbian:* wine from Trevi.

732. *Caudatory:* one of a train, a dependent.

905. *Vallombrosa Convent:* the famous monastery near Florence, founded about 1650 by a repentant profligate of high rank who would be likely to approve such a piece as Browning indicates.

1116. *Etruscan monster:* a relic of Etruscan art at Arezzo, representing the fabulous Chimæra, the three-headed brute which Bellerophon, mounted on Pegasus, the winged horse, destroyed.

1408. *Armida . . . Rinaldo:* the lovers in Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," on which operas have been founded.

1415. *Zecchines:* gold coins worth about two dollars and a half.

1601. *Tænia:* a tape-worm.

1664. *Stinche:* the prison.

1776. *Jansenius:* Cornelius Jansenius (1585–1638), from whom the Jansenists took their name; author of the work called "Augustinus," condemned by several popes in succession.

1803. *Helping Vienna . . . Mustafa:* when John Sobieski relieved Vienna, in 1683, from its second siege by the Turks under Kara Mustafa, Grand Vizier and General of Mahomet IV., Duke Charles of Lorraine led a part of the relieving force against the Turks, who were routed.

1845. *Gaudeamus:* let us rejoice.

1916. *Virgil's fieriest word:* "Æneid," viii. 314, 315 —

"Hæc nemora indigenæ Fauni Nymphæque tenebant,
Gensque virum truncis et duro robore nata."

The reference which follows is to ll. 351-353 of the same book.

1919. *Jove Ægiochus:* Ægis-bearing Jove.

1957. *Master Pietro:* Pietro Aretino. See note on X. 652.

1970. *Revealed to strike Pan dead:* an allusion to the legend that, at the hour of the Crucifixion, certain Greek sailors heard a voice proclaiming "Pan is dead."

2028. *Romano vivitur more:* "one does as Rome does."

2044. *Byblis in fluvium . . Lycaon in lupum:* Byblis into a river . . . Lycaon into a wolf, titles of transformations recorded in Ovid's "Metamorphoses."

2137. *Paynimrie:* heathendom.

2177. *Olimpias . . . Biancas:* fierce and fond women not above lending themselves to their husbands' schemes. For Olimpia, see IV. 232. Bianca is the heroine of the old Italian story on which Milman founded his tragedy of "Fazio, or the Italian Wife."

2178. *Ormuz:* an island in the Persian Gulf, which is a diamond market. See "Paradise Lost," i. 2.

2195. *Delilah:* Judges xvi. 9.

2204. *Circe:* the sorceress of the "Odyssey," daughter

of the sun, who changed the companions of Ulysses with a touch of her wand into swine.

2207. *Lucrezia:* Lucrezia Borgia (died 1523), daughter of Pope Alexander Borgia, instrument of the crimes of the Borgias.

2332. *One called Albano:* the next pope was Giovanni Francisco Albani.

2402. *That Athenian:* Themistocles, said to have killed himself by drinking bull's blood, which the ancients considered was poisonous.

2407. *Accursed psalm:* the psalm chanted in the Office for the Dying by the Brothers of Mercy who attend criminals to the scaffold.

Book XII. — The Book and the Ring.

Line 12. *The Wormwood Star:* Revelation viii. 11. A star believed to be a portent of death according to a superstition of the Middle Ages.

62. *Holy Doors:* see III. 567.

65. *Fénelon will be condemned:* Fénelon's "Explication des Maximes des Saints" was condemned by Pope Innocent in 1699 for its advocacy of Quietism.

89. *Dogana:* custom-house.

104. *Palchetto:* stage or scaffold.

114. *The Three Streets:* Via di Ripetta, Via del Babuino, and the Corso, diverging southward from the Piazza del Popolo.

140. *Pasquin's Street:* Pasquin, which names the street, was a broken stump of an antique statue probably of Ajax supporting Menelaus, near Pasquin's tailor-shop, the rendezvous of the city wits. After Pasquin's death in the sixteenth century, this statue was dug up near his shop, and set up there and named in his honor, and the sharp sayings and *bon-mots* of the city were pasted up on Pasquin, and hence called Pasquinades. A similar statue, Marforio, in another quarter, was used on which to post replies to Pasquin.

158. *Tern Quatern:* a lottery prize resulting from a combination of threes and fours.

178. *Pater:* "Our Father." — *Ave:* "Hail, Mary."

179. *Salve Regina Cœli:* "Hail, Queen of Heaven."

184. *Umbilicus:* navel.

198. *Just-a-corps:* close to the body, a tightly fitting coat.

215. *Socius:* an ally.

222. *Tarocs:* a game of cards.

275. *Quantum est,* etc.: "all the world of cultivated men," — from Catullus, 3, 2.

288. *Hactenus senioribus:* thus far for our elders, meaning the general public, what follows being confidential.

317. *Themis:* Goddess of Justice, Daughter of Heaven and Earth. "Themis' throne," the law court in Tuscany, Archangelis supposes to be better than that in Rome.

323. *Case of Gomez:* a veritable case, referred to in one of Browning's MS. sources for this poem.

324. *Reliqua,* etc.: "the rest let us put off till tomorrow."

325. *Estafette:* news carrier.

358. *Bartolus-cum-Baldo:* see notes on Bartolus and Baldo, I. Both rolled into one would but equal Cinone.

364. *Adverti,* etc.: I humbly beg that it may be noticed.

476. *Culver:* wood-pigeon.

501. *Idol-god, an Ass:* an accusation common against the early Christians.

519. *Palm-branch:* one of the Christian emblems found graven in the catacombs, in token of moral victory.

520. *Pro Christo:* for Christ.

644. *Ampollosity:* wind-bag quality.

712. *Astræa redux:* justice brought back.

741. *The famous relic . . . Martial's phrase:* see line 184. *Umbilicus* also means an ornamental knob at the end of the stick round which books, in Greek and Roman times, used to be rolled; hence the phrase *ad umbilicum*

pervenire (Martial, iv. 89) meant "to reach the end" of a book.

765. *Locum-tenens:* a proxy, holding the place of the governor.

783. *Gonfalonier:* bearer of the gonfalon or banner of the town, the mayor.

807. *Petrarch:* he was born in the town of Arezzo, and Buonarroti (Michel Angelo) in the territory, though not in the town itself.

808. *Vexillifer:* standard-bearer.

809. *The Patavinian:* Livy, born in Padua, or Patavium, which is its ancient name.

869. *The poet:* the Italian critic, poet, and patriot, Tommaseo (1803–1874), who wrote the inscription on the tablet placed on the walls of Casa Guidi by the municipality of Florence to the memory of Mrs. Browning: "Qui scrisse e morì E. B. Browning, che . . . fece del suo verso aureo anello fra Italia e Inghilterra." [Here wrote and died E. B. Browning, who . . . made with her golden verse a ring linking Italy to England.]

END OF VOL. II.

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